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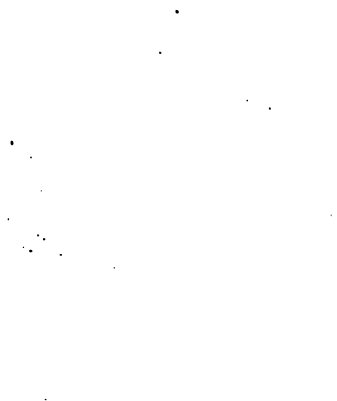
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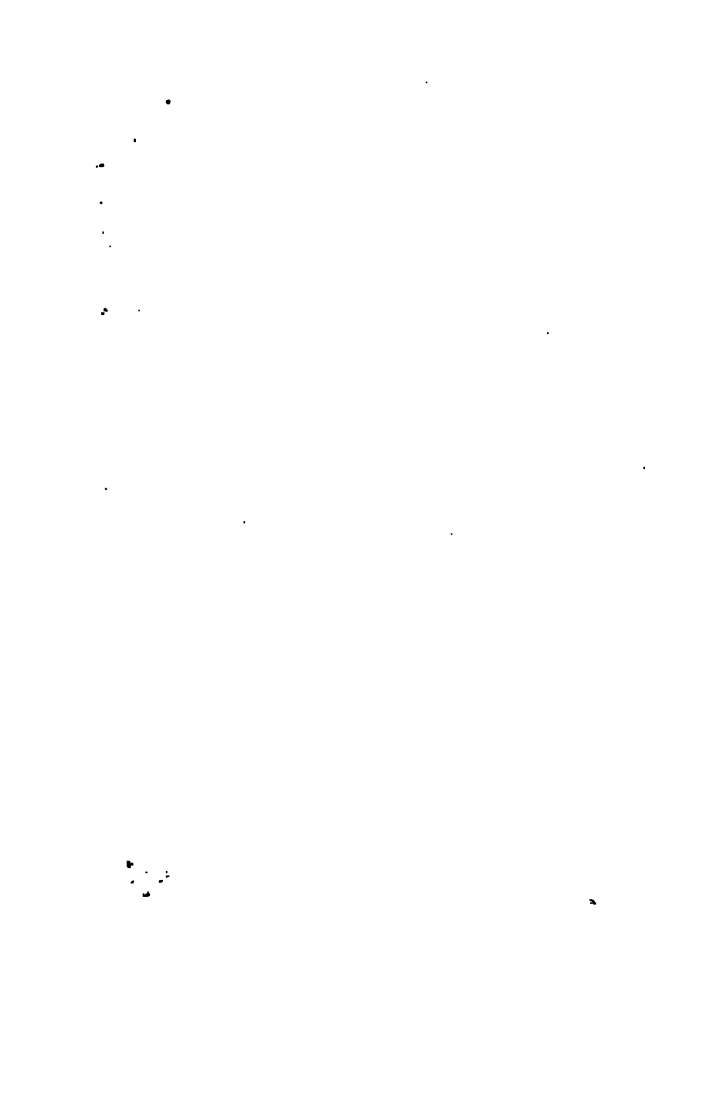
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LIFE OF
MARIE BONNEAU
DE MIRAMION
WITH A HISTORY OF THE
CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN
ALGERIA
G. M. CADDELL





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LIFE OF
MARIE BONNEAU DE MIRAMION.

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HIDDEN SAINTS.

LIFE

OF

MARIE BONNEAU DE MIRAMION,

BY

CECILIA MARY CADDELL,

Author of "Sœur Marie," "Wild Times," &c.



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MDCCLXX.

911 m 14

... we have been haunted
presentiment of death so often
persons destined prematurely to t
applied herself earlier and more
for that very reason, perhaps, t
otherwise would have done, to f
little daughter's character, and i
nto her mind such steady princ
irtue as would enable her to pass
rough the dangers of the wo
s she fancied she foresaw) Marie
ve to enter it at last unprotected
esence of a mother. With a
turally precocious, and a heart o
7 to the inspirations of piety, M
belle responded fully to these i
is, premature as at first

with all that is bright and beautiful in the estimation of childhood, and leading them thus gradually to feel that the "yoke is sweet and the burden light," which for Christ's dear sake, and for their own, she invites them to lay upon their shoulders.

In the first period of her life, as a wife and as a mother, with all the cares and responsibilities of a great household, and an immense estate imposed upon her, she fully realized the portrait which the wisest of men has left us, as his idea of a wise woman, one who "eats not her bread in idleness," but who hath "put her hand to strong things," who "has opened her mouth to wisdom, and who has had the law of clemency on her tongue;" who has "stretched out her hand to the needy;" whose husband has "praised," and "whose children have called her blessed;" in the second, she just as faithfully reproduced St. Paul's definition of a Christian widow: "a widow indeed, one whose good works make testimony of her life," and who, like the humble violet, to follow the sweet fancy of St. Francis de Sales, remains ever *at the foot of the cross, hidden and apart from all, and only known by the perfu-*

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virtues, and by the deeds of tender heroic charity, which, from out of the midst of her own lonely lot, she sheds as a heavenly balm upon all who have need of it.

Born in the lap of wealth, Marie de Medici was placed by her own ancestral traditions, as well as those afterwards acquired by marriage, in close proximity to a court where, spite of the fall of the reigning monarch, the traditions of the fourth Henry were still in

ladies of gentle birth and breeding, presided, smilingly, over duels in which their friends and relatives slaughtered each other in cold blood for the sake of an idle word, or, in defence, perhaps, of a reputation sullied already, if not ruined altogether.

Into society thus constituted, and composed of such materials, Marie de Rubelle entered at the age of fourteen, or less, a period when most girls are still in the nursery, without the safeguard of a mother's counsels, and with nothing but the buckler of an unconscious innocence before which vice itself grew silent and ashamed, to guard her from contagion; and she withdrew from it on her marriage, not only without the imputation of a light word or thoughtless action resting on her conduct, but with a character for true sanctity, which commanded an ever increasing veneration on the part of all, who, whether or not, they practised virtue in their own persons, had the grace, at all events, to honour it in others.

It may be useful to pause here for a *while*, and to note more particularly the *means* whereby she obtained this result

in the high places of the world
single in its follies ; or in other
trifling words, to touch pitch
In the first place, she made it the
rule from childhood, that God's
will could ever over-ride her own, how
ever ready to curb, restrain, or restrain
in any pursuit or amusement
seemed incompatible with this rule.
Next, she sought by diligent
study and prayer, to learn His will
clearly, and having once discovered it,
hesitatingly obeyed it. As a
daughter, while courteous and considerate
she was careful to ally her
friendship to none save those who
were by word and deed

was slavish to a degree we can hardly realise in these days, to treat kings and great princesses, wherever the interests of religion required: it, with the noble simplicity of one whose eye ever fixed on God alone, cared nought for the applause of men.

By these rules, carefully conceived and diligently carried out, she contrived to preserve her soul unsullied in the midst of the world with which by the very nature of her vocation, she was compelled, more or less, to communicate even on her death-bed; and by these same rules she was enabled to move steadily onwards from the perfection of one state to the perfection of another more perfect still, until the full measure of her appointed sanctity being filled up, death came and took her to those everlasting portals, which, readily as they unclose to all good Christians, may be said to fly open of their own accord to those who, like her, have deserved, by their great deeds of charity done on earth, to hear in a more especial manner that dictum of their divine Lord and ours: "I was hungry, and you clothed Me; naked, and you covered Me; a stranger, and

— of the world.”

But to return to the history of her childhood. Madame de Rubelle's prophecies proved correct, and little Charlotte's laughter was only nine years of a life of sorrow. Death deprived her for ever of a mother and a father. The blow fell heavily upon her, and she became so ill in consequence that for a time it almost seemed as if her life would be destined to fall to the ground, but Providence, however, had ordained it otherwise. The griefs of children, however violent they may be, are seldom, in their duration. Morning is the dawn of life, and these young natures thirst eagerly for its sunshine, that they may be an unconscious witness to its power.

and features retaining a shade of tender melancholy in their expression, which neither the inevitable gaiety of childhood, or the rosy hours of opening girlhood, were ever afterwards able entirely to dissipate.

Young as she was, she had in truth been able, in the midst of her grief and illness, to take the lesson of this early death, and to apply it in its twofold force and meaning to the education of her own soul.

Comprehending for once and for ever the utter vanity of those affections which, however innocent or authorised in themselves, are yet destined to end with time, she acknowledged the wisdom of fixing them early and unreservedly upon God alone; and from the sorrow which this separation of a few years cost her, she learned, moreover, to form a just idea of the despair and anguish wherein that soul is plunged, which has lost God for ever.

These were grave reflections, doubtless, for a child of nine years of age; but they were the product of a soil as deep as it was fertile, and brought forth in due season, therefore, an abundant harvest. The

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softened, besides, and toned down by mingled with other thoughts and on the subject, more in keeping her years. She suffered especially a kind of regret which most of us feel, when death steals our loved from us, regret that she had not her mother better in the few years had been blest by her possession. That she had to reproach herself with a lack of obedience or affection. Simply thought she might have loved her more, and if with her refined

she deemed it), of her affection during her mother's lifetime, she resolved to make her more especially her model after death, and she carried out this resolution in such a spirit of truth and generosity, that long before she had reached the age at which Madame de Rubelle had been taken from her, she had more than equalled, she had outstripped her model. Her mother's death caused an alteration in her father's household, which, if she had been a shade less steady, might have proved fatal to these good resolutions.

M. de Rubelle, a widower with five children, some of them considerably younger than Marie, in a state of health, moreover, sufficiently deplorable in itself, and aggravated by great sorrow, felt deeply the absence of parental supervision, which her mother's death and his own important legal avocations, would entail upon his young daughter. He gladly accepted, therefore, of his brother's invitation, to establish himself and his young family at his hotel, (a custom more common at all times in France than it is in *England*), and of the two to make *one common household*.

... with tastes and instincts
his own, did the honours of
with a grace and elegance
already rendered it one of the
lar and well known in Paris. 1
years previously, all the hono
social world had been usurped
aute Noblesse," the sole class
o courtly distinctions in the Fra
alois dynasty; but, during the c
7 which the country had so often
en convulsed, many of the
les of etiquette had been put
gotten, and the secondary c
aute Bourgeoisie," as it wa
se, namely, who having made
es by law or custom

wit and beauty of those by whom they were attended, these receptions soon equalled in attraction, if they did not surpass, the formal assemblies of the courtly class upon which, in the first instance, they had studiously been modelled. At the moment, therefore, when Marie became an inmate of her uncle's house, the saloons of his wife were frequented habitually, not only by the great magistrates and millionaires, the wits and literary celebrities of the day, but the very nobility of the court of Louis XIII., had come to consider it a privilege to be admitted to her circle.

The house, therefore, filled with servants and retainers, breathing of the great world with which it was so frequently in contact, and conducted in all its arrangements in a spirit of splendid luxury, which the immense fortunes of its owner seemed to justify him in expending on them, made, of necessity, sharp contrast with that other household, so calm and simple, regulated so wisely, and in such a true spirit of Christian piety by her mother, in which the young girl had passed the first portion of her existence. Her aunt was

... for once was no
but gave her its hearty homa
To shine in society, to achie
French call "a great succes
most polished circles, was th
at least, of the great objec
life. What she desired for her
doubt desired also for those
loved, and more especially for
whose social triumphs would, of
reflect new lustre on her own. W
ideas in her head, she could not,
mark the serious nature of
thoughts, and her tendency to
vices of interior life, without sor
ness. Perhaps even the gravi
child rebuked the levity of
and added some

like it also ; so, instead of taunting or scolding, she adopted the safer and less distasteful plan of introducing her to its fascinations, at an earlier age than was usual even in those days, when girls often became wives at fourteen, and were grandmothers before they had reached the mature age of thirty. Never had Paris been so gay as it was that year in which Marie first drank at its fountain of delights. It was nearly in the commencement of the regency of Anne of Austria. As yet all was sunshine, the clouds which were to darken over it at a later period, being hardly bigger, or so big as a man's hand, and scarcely perceptible in the political horizon. The death of Louis XIII., too gloomy a monarch for the light-hearted people whom he governed, and yet more, the demise of his great minister, Richelieu, a few months previously to his own, had taken a weight of unconfessed anxiety from men's minds, and society grew well nigh delirious in the rebound. Plays, balls, masquings, and courtly assemblies succeeded each other in quick succession; and without formally introducing her into society, Madame

to die in ?”

And, instead of scouting the mere offspring of a moment the one hand, or of accepting either as a sufficient reason for all pleasures, however innocent, or however natural to the station, her wise confidante answered :

“God has done you a great deal of good, child, in inspiring you with such sentiments. Keep them in mind, I beg of you, and let me check upon you whenever you are likely to be carried away by gaiety which is so natural in your position. Remember that the saints who

ball-room without wearing a heavy iron chain concealed beneath her jewelled robes, and the way in which she contrived to mortify her senses at the theatre was not only ingenious in itself, but if we consider her age, and her natural liking for the drama, may be styled absolutely heroic. She never refused to go when her aunt expressed a wish that she should do so; but once in the theatre, she resolutely closed her eyes and ears to all that was going on on the stage before her, endeavouring to fix her thoughts upon God alone, and dexterously concealing her occupation by hiding her face behind her fan, and laughing when she saw her companions laugh, thus deceiving them into the idea that she was enjoying herself in the same way, and as thoroughly as they were doing themselves.

She began also, at this time, to occupy herself more systematically and continually than she had hitherto done in the care of the sick. Too young as yet to be permitted to visit them indiscriminately out of doors, she turned her attention, in the first instance, to those of her own household. She found enough there for t

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abundantly to occupy her charity. Four times the number of domestics employed at present, were in those considered indispensable in the social arrangements of the rich. Servants were crowded together, therefore, in houses more for show than comfort, in a manner utterly subversive of the health and happiness of the inhabitants; and, as a natural consequence, contagious diseases, more common then, in all classes of society than they are now, were sure to spread in crowded households, and to be fatal.

struction every moment she could snatch from the ordinary duties of the day. Once it happened, that upon twelfth night, an old servant, who had already for some time been the object of her charitable zeal, was seized with his last agony. Twelfth night, even yet, is one of the great festivals of France, but in those days it was the feast of predilection of all Christian nations, being considered as the especial "Christmas day" of the Gentiles, the day on which Jesus, born on the 25th of December for the Jews, manifested Himself as by a second birth, to the rest of the world, in the persons of the magi. It was kept alike at the court of kings and in the cottage of the peasant, with a thousand amusing and fantastic ceremonies, differing as to detail in different places, but all commemorative of the one idea of the day, namely, the call of our pagan forefathers to the baptism and kingship of Christ. To this day in Hungary, the three kings, dressed in what is considered an appropriate costume, pay visits at the houses and palaces of the nobility, during Christmas-tide, making set speeches, or acting with the shepherds &

—o through the reeds and
with long lighted reeds in the
the fiery top as it glowed the
darkness, being considered typi-
star which led the Magi from
But the most choice and high
pleasures of Kingstide were res-
the happy home circle and the fi-
ited to join it in the evening.

reat cake, with its sugary ere-
owers and castles, its imperial
and its wreaths of frosted lil-
ought forth from its hiding-pla-
aving been solemnly blessed by
the parish, was cut up for dist-
the poor had the first share, a-
turally their right in all that

mours of royalty for the night upon its
ner. If the finder were a lady, she was
lowed the privilege of choosing her own
ng, and if a gentleman, he named the
ly whom he chose to elevate to his own
ort-lived pre-eminence. His court was
on formed, knights and aids-de-camp,
d lords in waiting, or their equiva-
nts, being stationed round his throne,
d his queen as liberally supplied with
lies and maids of honour, the king,
le facto" himself, if he happened to be
esent, renouncing, good humouredly, his
n pretensions, to become for the time
ing, the subject of "Le roi des Fèves."
oyal robes were ready for the investment
their persons, a canopy and throne pro-
led, and for some hours they kept up
eir mimic court amid much harmless
iety; all the minute etiquettes and
stoms of the French court, being scru-
lously observed on the occasion, even
wn to the cries of the "Le roi boit.
e reine boit." The king drinks, the
een drinks!" with which courtiers, and
a public admitted to behold the ban-
ets of royalty, deemed it needful in
se days to mark every cup of wine

and Marie enjoyed it in her c
as much, perhaps, or mor
noisier companions. On the
casion, however, she was u
after having been sought
throughout the crowded hote
at last upon her knees, by the
her patient. She had gone, i
decorated as she was for the b
him one more greeting before j
friends below; but seeing at
that he had already entered into
had remained to pray beside
suffered fearfully, convulsion
convulsion in such fierce and
ession, as might have

to seek her, saw at a glance, by her pale face and shaking limbs, that she really was incapable of the exertion, and permitted her to retire to her own chamber. There, upon her knees, regardless, or unconscious, of the sounds of mirth and music, which ever and anon came floating up to her from the illuminated halls below, she spent the remainder of the night in earnest supplication for the poor wretch who had just passed away, that this feast of the Epiphany, this "Christmas Day" of the Gentiles, might prove a real Christmas Day to him by the favourable manifestation of the Divine Child Jesus to his pardoned and repentant soul.

CHAPTER II.

It was probably somewhere about this period that Madame de Bonneau took her niece with her on an expedition to Forges, the waters of which spa had become, in consequence of a visit made there recently by the Queen-Regent, a sort of rage ;

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fashionable circles of Paris. It mattered little what the nature of the malady might be, whether curable or otherwise, whether a deep-seated gangrene, or a rheumatism, or a fit of temper, the physician in attendance knew too well what was expected of him, to suggest any remedy less expensive, or less agreeable, than a visit to "Forges." Either Madame de M... wished to be considered of that number, for whose maladies there was no cure save in the favourite watering-place of the day, or she really was ill, or

ping at St. Germain, Mantes, and Rouen, wherever, in fine, there was anything to be seen worthy the inspection of the traveller, and visiting, of course, the wonderful old churches which make the latter city dear, even to this day, to all lovers of ecclesiastical architecture. Marie, who had never left Paris before, was enchanted of course with the novel incidents of the journey, and the picturesque beauty of the old towns where they halted. But when at last, leaving cities and villages far behind them, they penetrated into the heart of the country, and Normandy, with its gardens and apple orchards, just flushing into bloom, unrolled itself to her eyes, she felt as if she had been transplanted for the moment into the old paradise of Eden, and had come, for the first time in her life, to comprehend something of that incomprehensible beauty with which God in the beginning had clothed the world.

She soon discovered that a residence at Forges itself was likely to prove far less pleasant than the journey which had brought her thither. The life, in fact, which people then led and still lead at watering places, a life in which every-

... in the pursuit of a
follies, could have had but
for a mind so accustomed, at
this time become, to the con-
higher things. One acquai-
ever, she made during her st-
which charmed her for the :
doubtless consoled her for :
petty annoyances of the pl.
Charlotte de Daillon, daugh-
Count de Lude, celebrated ev-
her wit and beauty, happened
ing at the spa that summer
nearly of the same age, and
continually at the "Source
nette," of which they both
waters, the two girls-

perceptibly as dew drop from the leaf, or sun ray from the flower, leaving little save a smiling recollection of the pleasa folly on the mind at a maturer age. The friendship of Marie with Mdle. de Daillon formed no exception to the rule, nevertheless I mention it here because it had this at least to distinguish it from others of the same kind, that after having lain dormant for many years, it was renewed at last at the hour of death. Charlotte married early, but the pursuits of the beautiful and fashionable Duchesse de Roquelaure being little in accordance with Marie's more serious tastes, their friendship was tacitly acknowledged by both as a thing of the past, and they sought each other's society no more. In spite of her follies, however, Charlotte never entirely forgot or lost sight of the feelings of love and respect with which her friend of fifteen had inspired her at Forges, and when she found herself, at the age of thirty, abandoned and betrayed by those upon whose affection she had most surely counted, and dying of a broken heart, the just consequences of the life of vanity she had led, she thought once more of Marie, and

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aching her presence at her death-bed, shed meekly and patiently to her wishes for the welfare of her soul, and contented herself happy in the end in being permitted to die in her arms.

Marie's brief absence from Paris, which began so joyously, closed for her in deep affliction. Her father, whose health had long been failing, and who never thoroughly got over the death of his wife, was taken so dangerously and suddenly ill, that all was over before his daughter had time to return to Paris.

birth and expectations, and the ceremony had vividly impressed itself on her imagination. Many of the ladies of the court assisted, as was customary in such cases, at the profession, and as Marie gazed upon them, in their jewels and fine laces, their glittering robes and perfumed tresses, and mentally contrasted *their* pursuits and objects, *their* pleasures in time and prospects in eternity, with those of the young bride of Heaven, humbly hidden beneath the pall which symbolized her separation for ever from the world, she felt and acknowledged without hesitation or circumlocution that the latter had chosen the better part, and that the door which admitted her to religious life might truly and emphatically be styled for her the "Gate of Heaven!"

Marie de Rubelle never went half way when there was question of doing anything for God. It was therefore into no religious house, fallen, as unhappily there were too many in those days in France, from its first fervour, and governed by some noble or royal personage, thrust less by merit than by courtly favour into her *high position*, that she desired to enter.

the most strict
that she could find in France
not far to go in order to dis-
she wanted. The Order of o
Lady of Mount Carmel, rest
pristine fervour by St. Teresa,
introduced into France in the
by Madame Acarie, and upon t
which she had established in
which was to witness at a la
the tears and repentance of a
ville" and a "la Vallière," Mar-
belle at last fixed her choice.

It does not follow, however,
cause she had this desire, she
ore really a vocation to religio
houghts and aspirations often

which at all events is patent to us all. For it is evidently His intention, that every state and rank of life should produce and possess its own peculiar type of sanctity, so that no one, rich or poor, married or single, may be left without guidance and encouragement in the position in which Providence has placed him. Such a vocation, therefore, may not be a real one, yet as the "morning offering" of the young heart, it will be very precious in the sight of God, provided only, that it be not lightly cast away, but simply put aside, because the soul honestly believes her path lays elsewhere; and treated thus, it will not only be a great favour in itself, but it will leave such a grace behind it, as will enable her to advance swiftly and steadily towards perfection, in that state, whatever it may be, to which she really is called. For she who would have consecrated her virginity to God, and does not only because convinced that His Will in the matter is not coincident with her own, will surely make all the better wife and mother for the sake of those aspirations after higher things, which flashed like a heavenly light across her girlhood, and she whose first thought

3

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fe was to trample on its pleasures, undoubtedly have a strength given against their undue indulgence which never would have attained, if her had been cradled in less lofty aspirations.

looked upon in the solemn light of a moment, matrimony will seem a very different thing in her eyes, to what it does to women who accept of it either from ill-considered affection, or for the sake of the worldly advantages it entails upon its ob-
Her marriage ring will be a pledge

will arise at the latter day to declare her blessed, and to hail her, as after Divine Providence, the chief instrument in their salvation.

Marie made no secret of her aspirations after conventual life. She told her aunt, frankly, all about it; and the latter, wise in her generation, did not herself attempt to combat the idea, fearing to fix it by opposition irrevocably in her mind.

She referred her, however, to her uncle, M. de Bonneau, for advice, and he remonstrated frequently and seriously with her on the subject, and without scolding or undue harshness, succeeded at last in inducing her to reconsider her resolution. He told her, that according to his notions of duty, she had a very special mission appointed to her to fulfil in the world, and that as sole daughter of her house, she was the only person who could in any degree supply to her young brothers the place of the parents they had lost. He himself was certainly their guardian, but his authority as such was much more limited than a father's would have been, and in a year or two more, would, of necessity, cease altogether. Freed from his control, they

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in a convent, with wealth at hand, and no one authorized to account for the mode in which she spent it, it was but too probable they would soon make shipwreck of themselves among the seductions which were ever ready to lure the rich and powerful to its embraces. If, on the contrary, she gave up her ideas of religious life, she would naturally become the rallying point to which they all would gather; and the serenity and peace of her married life would be at an end. They would learn that there were

with all the natural ardour of her disposition into the duties to which Providence seemed so especially to have appointed her, took her place without hesitation at the head of her family, and, as a tender and discreet adviser of such of its members as were older than herself, a mother and a wise one, to those who were her juniors, became in a marvellously short time, the object at once of their respect and love, and the tie which attached each to the other, and all to her, as the very soul and centre of the living circle.

They were united, in fact, as a large family of brothers and sisters unhappily seldom are, and their only disputes were disputes of love, as to which should give up most for the benefit of the rest. Their inheritance was a large one, but when they were old enough to come into its possession, they would allow neither guardians or relations to interfere in its distribution, dividing it by mutual consent among themselves, and arranging a business, usually so fruitful in heart-burnings and dissensions, as easily and joyously as *if instead of houses and lands, the ques*

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and been still of the toys of their
hood.

ing given up her convent scheme,
s guardians began to occupy them-
almost as a matter of course with
ations for her marriage. If worldly
ages had been her only object, she
not have had long to hesitate.
as beautiful to begin with. Her
exion was pure and transparent as
er, her features regular, her hair
nt, a colour especially admired
the French and her eyes almond

the most distinguished families in France. But in this grave matter she had already made up her mind, that no consideration either of riches or of honours should influence her choice. If she had consented at all to marriage, it was because she believed such to be the will of Providence in her regard, and contemplating it less in a worldly point of view, than as a sacrament which was to help her on her way to heaven, she resolved to share her affections with no one who would not, by his own piety, aid her in this the chief desire of her soul, the fixing them in the first instance entirely upon God !

Her first meeting, in fact, with the man whom she ultimately chose for her husband, took place in the Church of St. Nicholas des champs, the services of which she had been in the habit of attending from childhood. It was the parish church likewise of the de Beauharnais family, and the only son of M. de Beauharnais de Miramion, went there frequently in attendance upon his mother. The extreme deference and affection of his manner towards the latter, impressed Marie

... blushes and e
what she felt by no means
to him as she did towards t
suitors. He was in every
match, and her uncle accordi
in his favour.

M. de Beauharnais de Mira
that time only twenty-seven y
of prepossessing appearance,
and station equal to her own
family, who were well known a
sally respected for their virtues
ready and eager to give her an
welcome to their domestic c
things, therefore, promised fai
future happiness, and Marie
accordingly ; so happy
ing the off-

1645, she being little more than fifteen years of age, at the time of its occurrence.

Young as she was, however, she was so little of a child, either in tact or character already, that the first act of her married life was an earnest entreaty to her husband, to be permitted to continue, under his authority, the same pious practices which had sanctified her girlhood.

So earnestly and yet so wisely did she plead her cause, that M. de Miramion not only gave her the desired permission, but added of his own accord a promise that he would aid her in her pious resolution, by leading himself the life (so rare among the fashionable men of his day, or, alas, of ours) of a truly Christian husband, and this engagement, during the short time their union lasted, he most rigidly fulfilled.

Three days after the wedding, Marie bade a tearful adieu to her uncle and her brothers, and went to establish herself at her new home in the hotel of M. de Choisy, her husband's grandfather on the mother's side, with whom, according to French custom, he and his parents had always been in the habit of residing

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most illustrious among t
Choisy, aunt by marria
band, gave a splendid fête
at her residence in the pa
bourg. This Madame c
celebrated even among the
day, where so many were
by the same qualities, for
elegance of deportment an
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of Poland and Sweden wer
intimate friends and corres
her saloons, Corneille, the li
the hour, condescended to re
and Bussy declaimed the f
jectionable producti-

ease by which he was afterwards so distinguished, and which his courtly adulators extolled and tried as zealously to imitate, as if it had become a cardinal virtue in his person. This education, however, does not seem to have been given entirely gratis, for when Louis attained his majority, he settled a yearly pension of 8,000 livres on his fair instructress—a very magnificent remuneration, to say the least of it, for any amount of refinement he could have received at her hands.

If young Madame de Miramion therefore, had had any lurking hankering after the great world, nothing would have been easier for her, than under the auspices of her brilliant and worldly-minded relative to have indulged the fancy. But she had higher thoughts and higher ambitions than any mere wish to shine in society. She aspired to the character of a Christian wife, and this seemed to her incompatible with the laxity and dissipation of court life, as it was constituted then—she longed for the purer pleasures of the heart, *and she felt, that like the palm-shadowed fountain of the desert, they could only*

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in their first freshness and abundance in the shelter and comparative solitude of home.

her husband, to a certain extent, differed from her at first in this respect, for he was light-hearted and gay by nature, he loved society, and society liked and sought him in return. But even while acceding to her wishes in the matter, Marie, with a wisdom beyond her years, contrived to draw him from its most dangerous elements, by making his own home so pleasant to him, that he gradually lost all desire to leave it, and in the end declined every invitation to that which she had like as she did herself.

losing fortune in this life and happiness in the next, this bride of fifteen succeeded in inaugurating in her new home.

CHAPTER III.

The next six months of Marie's life flowed on like a dream of joy. The void which the loss of her parents had left since childhood in her large loving heart, seemed filled and more than filled by the fervent attachment which she cherished for her husband, and by the affectionate relations which she had succeeded in establishing for herself, with every member of his family, but more especially with his parents. Thus happy already as a wife and daughter, she began to look forward to the moment when, as a mother, she would taste of the highest and most engrossing purely human felicity, of which a woman's heart is capable. The birth of her expected child would in fact have filled her cup to overflowing, and she longed for it accordingly. It came at last—but not as she had so fondly imagined, amid the

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es and congratulations of a rejoicing
ly. She was one of those especially
ired souls, who are called to drink
ely of the chalice of their Lord, and
efore, even this long wished for joy
n it visited her at last, wore such a look
orrow on its bright face, as made it
ost harder to endure than a down-
t and undisguised adversity would
been. She was to be a widow before
was a mother, and her young husband
loved her so tenderly and would have
ympathized in her gladness, was never

cally against fatigue and grief, so long as he had the smallest need of her assistance. But when at last all was over, and grief could not sadden or inaction leave him to discomfort; she broke down at once without a cry or sob, and fell senseless beside the corpse. There she remained for hours, and even when they had succeeded in restoring her to a certain degree of animation, she remained so fixed and frozen as it were by grief, that but for the faint beating of her heart, they might have fancied she also was dead. Time went on, and still she lay in that half state of stupor, tearless and speechless, and resolutely refusing every thing in the shape of food, which they tried to force between her lips. Her life was hanging by a thread, every thing depended on her taking nourishment, and she was not in a state capable of appreciating that necessity. Her friends were in despair, and the physicians had almost given her over, when as a last effort her mother-in-law reminded her of her unborn babe, for whose sake it was so evidently her duty to preserve if possible her own life. *The bare mention of her expected child,*

her death, and from that time mechanically every thing in nourishment or medicine, deemed it advisable to give in their care, however, they could more for the next few months to keep her living. Her fever such that she could scarcely rise from the pillow, and when threatened at last for the birth of her child so ill and so reduced in strength the physicians despaired of success of either.

Terror, lest her babe should die without baptism, then took up her soul, she addressed herself to the Blessed Virgin for assistance

it in her arms, tears which had been so long denied her came to her relief, and she wept long and bitterly over the fatherless little one, whose birth had been surrounded by so many circumstances of sorrow. This sudden burst of grief relieved her, the necessity of watching over a child so forlorn even from the beginning, and doubly dear to her as the last relic of her departed husband, roused her effectually to exertion, and in her care and anxiety for its health, she gradually recovered her own. The first two years of her widowhood, were spent in the strictest retirement, and during that period, or immediately afterwards, her life was once more put in peril by small-pox, which was the scourge alike of rich and poor in those days, visiting with the strictest impartiality the palace of the king and the cottage of his meanest vassal, and owing to its highly infectious nature, and to the mistaken method pursued by physicians in its treatment, rarely failing in carrying off its victims, or at the very least in disfiguring them for life. That which attacked Madame de Miramion, was of so virulent a kind, that even after all danger

...received, as might
from her character, this in
a smile, but her mother-in-
indifferent, and woman, and
like, could not forbear shedd
the prospect. "Why do yo
mother?" the invalid the
gently; "surely a perishable
a life so useless as mine, c
such tears." The poor lady s
no doubt, thought otherwi
patient and loving attendan
daughter-in-law, was at leng
by the perfect recovery of the
that beauty over which she
many fruitless tears, was in a g
spared, the only trace of

leave her to accomplish in peace the pious desires which had already begun to stir in her heart. Barely seventeen, however, and with a pale, sad beauty still, which won for her the cognomen of the "Fair Statue" from Madame de Cornuel, she was not destined thus easily to escape its solicitations. Her days of mourning were no sooner over, than more than one brilliant alliance was offered to her acceptance, and her own family, fearing that she intended to become a nun, impressed upon her again and again the expediency of a second marriage. She was still so young that she did not venture to oppose her relations openly by closing her doors against all pretenders to her hand, and her humility, moreover, made her fear that she was unworthy of the honour to which she aspired, of consecrating herself entirely to God. In this perplexity she tried to pursue a middle course, and unwilling to decide upon so important a matter in a hurry, besought her friends to give her time for deliberation. The request was too reasonable to be denied her, and she employed the interval of peace thus granted in earnest prayer and su

... when M. de Choisy,
neither a safe or pleasant re
the agitation, which the 'F
then commencing against
tired with all his family t
house at Issy—Issy, that p
which Madame de Sevigné l
and where, as she tells
"Nightingales, and white M
gushing fountains," combin
fair weather of an early spring
her as much of innocent
mortals may hope to enjoy
Madame de Miramion had r
her first journey among the
of Normandy, and she loved
partly perhaps for the

Divine Lord in the Sacrament of His love, and when she left Him there, it was only to visit Him again in the persons of the poor and sick of the surrounding district, upon all of whom she delighted to lavish the same tender charity, which she had formerly expended upon the invalid servants of her uncle's household. She had nevertheless a good deal of repugnance to overcome during her first attempts at visiting the poor; for easy as this virtue looks on paper, it cannot in reality be thoroughly carried out, without a complete sacrifice and surrender of many of the most delicate tastes and instincts of human nature.

In Madame de Miramion's case, natural refinement, rendered still more sensitive by cultivation, made her nerves at first almost intolerant of that lack of cleanliness, and the various disagreeables arising from it, which of course had never come under her notice among the petted servants of her wealthy uncle, but which form invariably so large an item in the sufferings of sick poverty, when left entirely to its own resources. Natural as the feeling was, she considered it to be no excuse

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fulfilment of a duty expressly imposed
us by our Lord Himself, and in
more thoroughly to overcome it,
made it a rule to seek out her patients
g the lowest of the surrounding popu-
a; those who were afflicted by the
disgusting maladies, being the objects
r special predilection.

Following out this resolution, she lost
ppportunity of dressing wounds and
with her own hands, and numbers
oor people about Issy, owed their

convent, and finding as she grew up that she had a real vocation to religious life, she paid the sum needed for her admittance, and had the satisfaction in the end of seeing her become a zealous and most fervent nun.

During all these charitable occupations, Madame de Miramion was suffering constant anxiety, on account of her little daughter, whose state of health, owing no doubt to the sad circumstances preceding and accompanying her birth, had been deplorable from the beginning, and who now in the second winter of her existence, suffered from a chest complaint, which threatened daily to become fatal. In her anguish at the prospect of thus losing her only child, Madame de Miramion made a vow to perform a pilgrimage to the Chapel of Saint Valerian, a celebrated shrine in those days, in the event of its recovery. Her petition was heard and accepted; contrary to all reasonable expectation, the little Marie struggled successfully with her malady, and in the August of the ensuing summer, her mother prepared to accomplish that pilgrimage, to the promise of which she

gentleman, who despairing
her hand by any more legit
intended to resort to this
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it on him. The thing seemed
and impossible, that neither
Miramion or her friends a
credence to it, and she refused
the journey, or even to alter th
which she intended to commer
left Issy accordingly one fir
early in the month of August
chaperonage of her mother-in-la
de Miramion the elder. A va
waiting women, were in the ca
them, a young

point of honour, never to travel even the smallest distance, without a whole army of pages and grooms to guard them on the way. The disturbed state of the country may have had something to do with this ostentatious display, for as time went on it gradually diminished, and twenty years later, when things had quieted down somewhat, and people no longer went about in terror of their lives, Madame de Sevigné writing to her daughter lays it down as a law of *bon ton*, that six valets should accompany her carriage in all her excursions—"But only six,"—she says, as if she felt it to be a very moderate allowance indeed—adding emphatically, that any larger attendance than this would be considered "Provincial," or in other words, "Vulgar" among the court fashionables of Paris.

Madame de Miramion's pilgrimage, though it ended so drearily for her, began under the most favourable auspices. The day was bright and sunny, and as the carriage rolled over the heights of St. Cloud, they put aside the little leather curtains, which then answered the purpose of the glass windows we use at present

below.

They were already w
their destination, and not
occurred to interrupt or
were perhaps congratula
on the success of their ex
their own courage, in l
in undertaking it, when t
suddenly stopped, and s
troop of men armed to
mounted on strong horse
was made, or even attempt
the men appointed for that
seized with a sudden panic
away as fast as their stee
them. The coachman --
his

placed by those lawless proceedings, from being discovered by any chance passenger on the road.

The curtains, however, had been strongly fastened up to keep them in their proper place, and a struggle instantly ensued between the prisoners and their captors, the latter trying with their swords to cut the leather straps, while the former endeavoured to prevent them.

During this unequal conflict, Madame de Miramion had her hands so terribly cut, that she was all over blood in a moment, but her mother-in-law was more successful, and actually contrived to turn the weapon of one of her foes against himself, and to wound him severely in the arm. In the midst of the struggle, the carriage having recrossed the bridge of St. Cloud, dashed into the Bois de Boulogne, six horses already waiting the appearance of the vehicle there, were harnessed to it with the speed of lightning, and the prisoners soon found themselves once more careering over the country at a tremendous pace, carried *they knew not whither*, and under the guidance of—*they knew not whom!*

CHAPTER IV

At the commencement of the
seen attack, Madame de L
found time to recommend her
to God, beseeching Him to
the full possession of her ju
to give her strength and coura
herself against her foes. As
have already seen, she joined
in-law in her efforts to keep b
tains, in order that their pi
might attract the attention of
and when her cut and bleedin
longer permitted her to exe
this manner, she still kept
window

those who heard it had had time to ask themselves from whence it came, and for what purpose it was raised.

In this manner they soon passed over the plain of St. Denis, and entered the forest of Livry, lying just beyond it. Here the path became so narrow and entangled, that her escort were forced to abandon their position beside the carriage, some of them moving on in front, and others falling to the rear. Seeing the door thus undefended, Madame de Miramion took a bold resolution, and seizing a moment when they were off their guard, jumped out of the carriage. She chose a spot where the brambles grew most thickly, in hopes of being able to conceal herself beneath them, and heedless of thorns and briars, made her way undauntedly through the thicket, until her dress was torn to ribbons, and her face and neck and hands all scratched and bleeding. Her flight being soon discovered, two of the horsemen easily succeeded in overtaking her, and fearing lest they should mount her on one of their horses, and so carry her away completely from the protection *which the company of her mother-in-law*

18
s. Madame de Miramion, however, positively refused to accept any present at their hands, openly declaring that she would neither eat or drink until she was at liberty again.

On starting once more on their journey they left her mother-in-law, her good maid servant behind them in the forest, permitting her only to retain her women, with the young man, the duty it was to stand behind the carriage who positively refused to be separated from his mistress.

Relays of horses now meeting them every station, they went like the wind and their prisoner never lost her composure.

proof of her need for help, and as an earnest of future reward to those who procured it for her. Her captors, however, had an answer ready for all inquiries, stating at once that she was mad, and that they were conveying her by order of the king to an asylum. An order of the king was, in those days, quite a sufficient explanation for any amount of tyranny exercised on individuals, and in the state to which the poor prisoner was by this time reduced, her head-dress fallen off, her dress and kerchief torn to ribbons, and her face and hands all stained with blood, it must have been easy enough to persuade people of the truth of the assertion. No attempt at a rescue was therefore made, and they reached their destination without any material interruption. It proved to be the Chateau de Launay, a strong fortress three leagues from Sens, and the property of M. de Bussy Rabutin, a man of such morals, that Madame de Sevigné, a near relation and favourite correspondent, always spoke of him as "Mon oncle le Corsair." De Launay had been formerly a commandery of the Knights Templars, and it was still

and wonder that it lo
and bristling in the eyes of
she first saw it in the dim lig
or that the rattling of chain
of the bridge, the echoes of
as it rolled over the vault
underneath, and the crowd o
bearing torches in their han
it in the inner court, should
her heart with terror, and co
in her worst suspicions,
nature of the treatment she w
receive from its owner, igno
still was of his real name, or
pose for which he had coi
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- The fact of her

case could only be looked upon as a prison. In this dilemma a young cavalier, masked so as to prevent any future recognition of his person on her part, came forward, and in the most gentle and respectful terms, besought her to alight, were it only for a few minutes, in order to take the rest and refreshment she so evidently needed, after the fatigues of the day. Soothed by his manner, Madame de Miramion ventured to make some inquiries as to the name and rank of her unknown captor, and he at once mentioned M. de Bussy, a friend and near relation of his own, as the person by whose contrivance she had been brought to "De Launay."

The name was not calculated to reassure her. M. de Bussy was already known to her, as one of the vainest and most dissipated men in Paris, but when the masked cavalier further added, that so far as he understood the matter, she had been brought hither with her own consent, and under the appearance of force, in order to avoid the opposition of her family to the match, indignation got the better of fear, and she vehemently declared;

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only that she never had consented, that she never would consent to a marriage with a man, who had acted so base and treacherous a part in her regard. A long silence followed this assertion, at last the young knight said gently, "We are here two hundred gentlemen, friends or connections of the Comte de Montfort, and pledged to aid him in his enterprise. Nevertheless, if things be as you say, and that he really has brought you here against your own consent, I, in the name of all my comrades, engage to

furniture, the only articles it contained being, curiously enough, a brace of pistols which had been left there by accident. Madame de Miramion seized upon them at once, and having ascertained that they were loaded, she kept them close to her elbow during the remainder of the evening. Finding that she persisted in remaining in this dreary abode, they lighted a fire, and did all they could to make her comfortable, her own valet bringing in the cushions of her carriage, in order that she might repose upon them. She positively refused to be separated from her maid, and they were obliged, therefore, to allow the latter to enter and remain for the rest of the night with her mistress.

Immediately afterwards, they served up a sumptuous supper, but she put dish after dish aside, declaring calmly that she had made up her mind from the beginning, neither to eat or drink until she had been restored to freedom. Alarmed by her determined resistance, the gentlemen who had aided de Bussy in his unlawful enterprise, entered one after another into her presence, endeavouring some by menaces, some by entreaties to induce

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ent, and to agree to an immediate
with their leader. He took
however, not to appear himself at
hoping that her indignation would
itself harmlessly on his friends,
et appeased by their entreaties, she
be in a better mood to listen when
ould judge it prudent and needful
d his own cause in person. Their
s, however, were by no means
able; and astonished and angry at
ostinate determination she displayed,
lost to cut the gordian-
elegance

with him at once, consented, though reluctantly, to see him.

He came accordingly, not alone, however, but surrounded by his friends and followers, and throwing himself on his knees after the approved fashion of the time, besought her pardon for the violence of which he had been guilty in her regard. Madame de Miramion rose instantly from the cushions upon which she had been reclining, and looking him full in the face, declared with a grave earnestness, which must have convinced him, if he were not convinced already, of the hopelessness of his suit. "M. de Bussy, I swear before the living God, your creator and my own, that happen what may I will never be your wife!"

The words had scarcely passed her lips ere exhausted completely by fatigue and terror, she fell back fainting and insensible on her couch. A physician who chanced to be staying at the fortress was sent for in hot haste, and he declared at once that her pulse was failing rapidly, and that life itself was in danger from exhaustion. A death which in the eye of the law might have been looked upon

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order, formed no part of de Bussy's
tions with regard to his prisoner.
, moreover, had by this time reached
that six hundred of the men of
ns," having heard of her abduction,
marching to the rescue, and feeling
nced, beside, that even without such
her heroic firmness must baffle him
e end, and dead or alive deliver her
of his hands, he resolved to make a
e of necessity, and restore her him-
to freedom.
his intention he announced the mo-

having gained her point, she consented on entering the carriage to swallow a couple of eggs, positively declining any more solid nourishment, in the fear that it might contain an opiate. The draw-bridge was then let down, the carriage rolled slowly out of the courtyard, and she was once more on her way to freedom. The young knight of Malta, with two of his companions, had been appointed by de Bussy as her escort, and he took advantage of his post at the carriage door to use all his eloquence in excuses for his brother. Madame de Miramion listened to him with apparent calmness, but still indignant at the treatment she had received; she refused to give any promise which might prevent her from seeking hereafter to punish him by legal proceedings for his crime. He was still urging the point, when they arrived within sight of "Sens," and not daring, after all that had occurred, to enter the city, he caused the horses to be unharnessed, and after saluting Madame de Miramion politely, rode back as fast as he could with his companions and servants to "De Launay."

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it, and feeling incapable
step further, she entered
she met with after passing
implored shelter for the night
readily accorded, and when
was being prepared for her
that the whole town was in
consequence of the forcible
lady by one of the court
that by command of the Queen
a regiment of soldiers was at
arms, in order to march to
She had just strength to tell
she was the lady whose liberty
imperilled, and to entreat
quaint the authorities with
and then

for the purpose of aiding in her rescue, flew at once, with her cousin, the Abbé de Marsilly, to the house where she had taken refuge.

Firm as she had shown herself in the hour of danger, her strength gave way when there was no longer any occasion for exertion, and she fainted the moment they entered her chamber. As soon as she had recovered herself a little, she asked after her mother-in-law, left so cruelly behind in the forest of Livry. They told her that she also had done her duty nobly, having made her way as best she could on foot to the nearest village in the forest, and despatched messengers from thence to Paris, in order to notify the fact of her daughter-in-law's abduction to her family. The men sent on this errand had gone so fast, that by the time she herself reached the city in a cart, the only vehicle the poor villagers could place at her disposal ; M. de Rubelle had already obtained an order from the Queen Regent, for the rescue of his sister, and had set out for Sens in order to enforce it. He had but just arrived, and was actually engaged in marshalling the soldiers ap-

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ed to accompany him, when news of
escape arriving, he hurried at once to
her.

A long and severe illness was the
result of the fatigue and terror
of his adventure, and for a time Madame
Miramion's life even was considered by
physician to be in danger.

During this malady which confined her
some months to her chamber, and
at last to her bed, she yielded to the
wishes of her family, and contrary to her
inclinations, allowed them to institute

ing to the court-faction, and the families of "de Bonneau" and "Miramion" as naturally siding with the Parliament, all future attempt at mediation on the part of the prince, would of course have been made in vain. What princely policy, however, had been unable to effect, a single act of generosity on the part of "de Bussy" accomplished for him in a moment. In the civil war which followed, the chiefs and nobles of France, instead of marching united against a foreign foe, found themselves arrayed one against the other, and in a position consequently to avenge themselves on any of their number who had either wounded their pride, or put a check upon their ambition. Acting upon this principle, the leaders upon both sides took far more heed of their own personal piques and prejudices, than of the real interests of the party they were supposed to serve, and reprisals became the order of the day; he who had succeeded in vanquishing his foe, invariably sacking his castle, and carrying off its spoils at the risk of ensuring the same fate for his own abode the first time the

fortune of war should declare him.

The Chateau de Rubelle near the property of Madame de chanced to be threatened with and de Bussy, who was in the hood in command of some of troops, hearing of its danger, despatched a regiment at his own to preserve it from ruin.

It was impossible to carry on after such an act as this, and de Miramion, who in the had, as

CHAPTER V.

This adventure, which seemed at first sight likely to have plunged Madame de Miramion, even against her will, into all the dangers and frivolities of court life, as the wife of De Bussy, ended in fixing her thoughts and resolutions upon God alone: so wonderfully does He control the destinies of His creatures, so easily does He turn aside the weapons of men and compel them, even while they are seeking to frustrate His designs, to aid on the contrary and to hasten their fulfilment!

In the silence and solitude of her sick chamber, she had ample time for reflection, and she gradually learned to consider M. de Bussy's attempt against her liberty, as a warning to break more entirely than she had hitherto done with the world. In pursuance of this idea she had no sooner recovered her health, than she besought permission of her own family *to retire for a time into a convent, urging*

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measure upon them as a means of
ing any further violence on his part
as a very common practice among
then, to retire for weeks and even
his into religious houses, where they
practise a degree of prayer and
ace, and enjoy an amount of pious
ade, incompatible with their ordinary
s in the world ; Madame de Miramion
not therefore be accused of affecta
in adopting this plan, and her family
og even more than she did a second
apt, (which in the confusion of those

towards a life which in its early widowhood bore some resemblance to her own. Everything therefore in the convent pleased her, its humiliation rejoiced, its austerities charmed her in a way no earthly delights had ever done, and if she had been free to follow her own wishes, she would probably never again have left it save to join the Carmelite order, towards which all her lifetime she seems to have been strangely drawn. This was just what her family most feared and repudiated, and accordingly they never left her any peace until she consented, after a residence of six months at St. Marie's, to return to the abode of her husband's parents.

Long before she left the convent, she had, however, already made up her mind on the very point upon which their wishes were most likely to be at variance with her own, having quite resolved to follow the advice of St. Paul, and to remain a "widow indeed," for the sweet sake of Christ. In vain, therefore, they pressed one good alliance after another upon her for her favourable consideration. M. de Capmartin, a near relative of her late husband, even going so far as to procure

to that of his being a member of
the same family, and actually residing
under the same roof as herself. But she
was not moved by his wishes, or with the
will of God, which she felt continually
drawing her to another kind of life, and upon
her austere silence to all his entreaties,
absolutely refusing to see him save
in the presence of others, she prayed
continually with earnest tears to God that
He would vouchsafe to deliver her from
her painful state of doubt in which she
was, by giving her some positive
revelation of His Will in her regard.
Her prayer was heard, and upon three dis-
tinct occasions God gave her so clearly to
understand that He was calling her to F

our Lord, when being in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament God seemed to speak as it were in the interior of her soul, tenderly reproaching her with her diffidence in trusting herself to Him, and ending in some such words as these: "Am I not powerful enough to keep thee safely in any state I choose thee to adopt?—why then these long delays in giving thyself entirely to *Me*, Who have already given Myself so entirely and unreservedly to thee?"

These words seemed to penetrate her whole being, and she remained afterwards body and soul so absorbed in prayer, that when the hour came for closing the church at night, the person charged with that office was obliged to remind her that it was time for her to leave it also, if she did not wish to be shut up there till morning. On the feast of the Epiphany, a few days afterwards, she went once more to pray in the same church. There, being still in doubt, notwithstanding all that had occurred already as to her future conduct, she besought God more earnestly than ever, to tell her what gift He would *have her to give on this day, when the*

part—this is the only gift I
is I will have, whole and entire
without any reserve or division
features.”

It was impossible to doubt the
f the revelation, and unable any
o resist the promptings of Divine
he went at once to her director and
him what had happened. He advised
a consequence to make a retreat
onvent of the Sœurs Grises, the
rned by Madlle. le-Gros, the spiri-
tual daughter of St. Vincent
n order in the first place to arrive
thorough understanding of God's
ier regard, and in the next, to
herself for its entire fulfilment.

she or the clergymen whom she afterwards consulted, one of them being St. Vincent of Paul himself, could any longer entertain doubt on the subject. It was in the middle of the night, and (as if to prove that imagination had no share in the revelation) from out of a deep sleep, that He chose to intimate for the third time His pleasure in her regard. She was awakened by something like a sharp blow on her shoulder, and fancying it was one of the sisters come to call her, started up. The room was all a-light as if with the morning sun, and supposing from this circumstance that she had over-slept the usual hour for rising, she was preparing hurriedly to dress, when a voice, *that* voice which she had already heard twice before, distinctly said, "Be not astonished! It is *I*, thy Lord and Master, Who addresses thee!" Filled with awe and love she flung herself upon her knees, and in that humble posture listened to such counsels as God never gives except to those whom He has predestined to great sanctity. "The time had come," He said, "the moment had arrived when to doubt would be weakness, *if it were not worse.* He had chosen her

more especially in the heart.
He asked in exchange, what
heart—her *whole* heart.
it might be, it was no
God !”

Her first thought as
these words of almost tenderness
her Creator, was one of gratitude
—her next was of diffidence
which the Saints ever feel
first to comprehend that
them to do great things
But when after a moment's
half loving, half reproving,
dost thou fear? Am I not
enough to uphold thee ?”-

had filled the room passed suddenly away, and she found herself to her great surprise in darkness. Up to that moment, so little had she been dreaming of the miraculous, she had simply concluded that the light surrounding her had been the effect of the morning sun. The vision nevertheless must have occurred at a very early hour of the night, for she spent some hours longer upon her knees in fervent prayer, and the church clock struck three ere she lay down once more upon her bed, to rest, if possible, but not as may easily be believed, to sleep. After such an admonition as this, delay could no longer be permitted or enjoined, and on the 2nd of February following, she pronounced with the consent of her director and of St. Vincent of Paul, that vow of chastity which bound her to her Divine Spouse for ever!

She made no secret of the fact, taking care on the contrary to prove to her own family, by certain alterations in her attire and comportment, that her resolution against a second marriage was irrevocable.

It was an age of luxury, especially in

—materials, covered
ened with gold and silver
over even with jewels, either
value in themselves, or be-
mous value by the profusion
they were employed.

All this Madame de-
nounced at once, her dress
composed of some common
stuff, and she never wore silk.
The latter fact may seem of small
now, yet it was a source of con-
tention in those days, and pro-
duced no small annoyance to her
silk being appropriated almost
rank, and the woman who
therefore, naturally seem-

become one if retained in the state of greater perfection she was about to enter. Like St. Teresa, she cared for "the whiteness of her hands," and the "softness of her hair." She loved perfumes, moreover, and took pleasure in the richness and beauty of the furniture of her apartments. It did not at first occur to her that there was any necessity for retrenchment in these matters. In renouncing dress she had renounced, as she considered, all that could make *her* attractive to the world, she forgot the secondary danger of making it in its turn attractive to her, by surrounding herself with the luxuries of its elegant ease. St. Francis de Sales, with all his tenderness, became severe in such matters with any of his penitents who aspired to perfection, and with good reason; the mere gratification of the senses implied in such indulgences, being sufficient to destroy the wholeness of the sacrifice by which the creature seeks to make herself, and her human inclinations a holocaust to God!

Madame de Miramion had yet to learn this truth, and even while wearing almost *the dress of a poor woman*, she amused

— her time, for
her visitors in her own cl
on her bed, which she us
pose instead of a sofa.
her sleeping apartment v
furnished as if it had been
and the bed, purposely
striking object it contain
in a sort of gilded alcove,
platform as if it had been
surmounted by a baldequi
the richest materials to be

Madame de Miramion c
be hung in velvet, black &
never even dreaming that e
beneath a practice so com
rich persons, she took

understood the natural elevation of her soul, and felt that he could use a holy liberty in his strictures on her conduct. He made no disparaging remark, however, but just as he was leaving, he asked respectfully to be permitted to see her *real* chamber. "Mon Père," she answered a little astonished at this request. "This is my real apartment. I have none but this!" "Pardon me, madame," he answered simply, and yet perhaps with a dash of gentle satire in his manner, "but I can hardly believe it even now, for I never dreamed that a Christian widow could like to surround herself with so much magnificence!"

"A Christian widow!" The "widow indeed" of St. Paul! that was sufficient! Next day all the hangings of velvet had disappeared, and curtains of plain gray cloth had taken their place. She must have told this reproof long afterwards to her family, but she said nothing to them at the time, leaving them to blame her as much as they please, and this no doubt they did, the change being so sudden that in their eyes it must have looked like a *mere caprice*.

soon afterwards she
immolation of all vanity
by cutting off her long hair
of a peculiar and most
and growing in great abundance
been considered one of her
beauty.

This act brought, as might
a fresh shower of railleries
strances on her head. "How
her friends asked impatiently
many others did, a priest
making herself ridiculous
like a beggar?"

Undoubtedly she could
felt it as well as they did
and felt something

beyond the routine of a merely pious life, and therefore, that God would demand pledges of fidelity from her, which He would not have required, had her state been lower. She knew that if He is a loving God, He has declared Himself a jealous God as well, and she therefore, perfectly understood, that as a mere matter of justice the soul which He calls to entire union with Himself, will be required to die from the very outset *visibly and outwardly* as well as *invisibly and interiorly* to creatures, in order that no one may mistake her vocation, or seek to rob her Creator of the heart which He has chosen for His own,

This consideration rightly interpreted, is in fact the key to many of those deeds which men with a compassionate shrug of the shoulders, are pleased to nickname the "pious extravagance of the Saints," regardless of the fact proved over and over again by the experience of ages, that extravagant as such things may seem to the generation which sees them, they become acts of sublimest wisdom in the estimation of that which follows, and *which is privileged to read them by the*

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God sheds over the graves of those who have stooped to such heroic folly for his sake.

Mrs. de Miramion allowed her mockers and censors to say what they pleased, without attempting to defend or explain her motives; nevertheless, calmly as she viewed the outcry, she acknowledged to her director, that she felt it most severely. She took refuge in a life of active charity, and in giving such an excess of zeal and energy to her work, as would have exhausted her body and soul at the very outset, if her superior had not interfered. Perhaps her ardent enthusiasm or self-will, or perhaps her position as a widow and mother as she was,

which she had begun to find real consolation. He told her plainly that the work of God must be accomplished in her own soul, before she could venture to offer herself to the aid of others. She was still so young, and so much a novice in true devotion, that even the excitement of charity might prove prejudicial to the spirit of prayer, which it should be the first object of her life to establish in her soul. If, as seemed likely, she was called to the difficult task of leading the life of a nun in the midst of the world, she would, as a necessary consequence, have to repel its solicitations, even while exposing herself to its dangers—to be in it, and yet not *of it*—hidden interiorly in God, yet acting and moving externally among His creatures—and for such a vocation as this, a greater grace almost would be required, than for that of a cloistered sister. Moses had spent forty days upon the mountain, before giving the law to the people of Israel; our Divine Lord Himself had devoted thirty years to Nazareth, for the three which He had employed in preaching, and with such *examples as these before her, he thought*

1

ature. When she had fir-
God in her own soul by a
of prayer and recollection
presence, then, but not
might hope to serve Him w
to herself and others in the
creatures. It required son
give such advice, and to c
career of charity at a moment
seething over with human mi
to cry aloud to all her citizen
but it must have required c
obey it, as Madame de Mirami
out a murmur or remonst
next year was spent in unbro
and devoted completely to nne
ance. How

form rather of a request than a command"—and "to accept their service in a spirit of interior gratitude, as if it had been an act of charity gratuitously rendered"—"to embrace humiliation with *both* hands," as an inestimable treasure confided to her keeping—"to check every conversation tending, however indirectly, to her own laudation"—"to receive those whom she knew had spoken or done evil things against her, exactly as she would have done, had she been ignorant of their mis-doing"—"to manage so that peace and union should be the result of her endeavours after a more perfect life, instead of the discord which too often flows from ill regulated devotion"—"to be patient with herself and her own defects, submitting cheerfully to any humiliation they might bring upon her," and lastly, "to exercise the self-same charity in regard to her neighbours, bearing their weaknesses and short comings, exactly in the same spirit and for the same motives as she endured her own," these are virtues which may seem less heroic than scourge or hair-shirt, but which enter far more deeply into the spiritual life, forming the

needed for the wife and mother,
the cloistered maiden, and as
even more so among the rich than
the poor—virtues which become
very minuteness and of their
hourly demands upon the
a perseverance more heroic :
run than heroism itself—virtues
which once they have become
the soul are certain to elevate
its station in the world may
only true dignity of man—his
a Saint of God!

During this year's retreat,
Miramion was permitted by her
to add penance and mortification
small degrees to her

a way, that in the day time they could be folded up and put out of sight, while her bed remained as carefully arranged as if it had really been the place of her nightly slumbers.

Twelve months, the time appointed by her director, passed away in the unremitting practice of these virtues, and having proved by this long obedience how completely she was actuated by the Spirit of God in all her desires, he gave her leave at last to follow them out by engaging in a life of active benevolence. She was named almost immediately afterwards, Treasurer of the Society of St. Vincent of Paul, an office requiring not only indefatigable zeal, but a good head besides for business. Never in truth were head and heart and open hand more needed than they were just then, to stem the flood of misery which had burst upon the land.

The wars of the Fronde had laid waste the country and destroyed the harvests, and people deeming their only safety to be in strong walls, flocked in crowds to the fortified towns, and more especially to Paris. They even brought their cattle *with them*, and this overplus of human

quences, famine and disease.

Into this vortex of misery, Ma Miramion plunged at once. She over the sick night and day, for some months at the Hotel Dieu, express purpose of regulating the nurse on invalids, and training on the same duty. She visited the their own houses, relieving the private, who were too shame-faced whose day of prosperity had been recent, to admit of their receiving in public, while the less scrupulous of mendicants she fed day by day gates of her own house during the time the famine lasted, to the num

more than compensated her for the effort, and the mere occupation of distributing these alms, gave such exquisite delight to her soul, that she would sometimes in a spirit of penance resign it to others, saying with serious playfulness, "It is so great a pleasure to me, that I am over paid on the instant, and shall have no right to look for any reward in the next life!"

Material evils, unfortunately, were not the only or the worst calamities war brought upon the country, the almost total demoralisation of the wretched population subject to its influence, following, as a matter of course, in its train. Occupied continually in the struggle and its chances, the old gradually neglected, and at last forgot, the most essential practices of religion, and the young grew up in absolute ignorance of its teaching. To remedy this state of things, Madame de Miramion caused a number of small missions to be preached at her own expense, in all those towns and villages which had suffered the most in these disturbances. *Not content with this, she went herself frequently round the environs of Paris*

to persuade their husbands
same, catechising children,
the need seemed greatest,
houses of the "Sœurs Gr
especial duty it is to teach in
as well as to attend the h
visit the sick and poor a
houses.

In the midst of these occu
father and mother-in-law, o
other died, and her husba
father, M. de Choisy, so
them to the grave.

She attended each of them
and they each died blessing
second Ruth, the daughter "
seven sons" and "seven

remedies, and announced her resolution of leaving herself henceforth entirely in the hands of God. Obedience compelled her indeed to a reasonable care of her general health, as the obvious means of retarding the progress of the malady, but she refused all local remedies, and positively declined to relax in her habits of prayer and mortification, or to give up her works of charity. She could not, however, refuse her brother's earnest entreaties, that as a last hope of recovery, she would try the waters of Bourbon. Twenty years later, Madame de Montespan made this spot the most fashionable watering-place in France, but when Madame de Miramion went there, it was merely a poor village, a "*place triste*" in the midst of a country "*vilain et étouffé*," says Madame de Sevigné, who chose Vichy on her own account, as being the brighter and more cheerful residence. Perhaps it was for that very reason, that Madame de Miramion preferred Bourbon, which with its poverty and lack of fame, gave her ample opportunities for the practice of all the favourite virtues of her soul. During her residence there, in fact, she applied herself to the

chalice itself being made of tin or
and the vestments of poor stuffs,
falling to pieces from neglect and c

She employed every moment she
spare from her poor people there
mending altar linen and old ves
and making new ones; and before
the country, she had provided
chalices for all those churches wh
hitherto been unable from poverty
cure them. She had ample time fo
manual works of mercy, having be
bidden while following the course
waters, to apply herself to mental
She contrived to make up for this
ion however, by keeping her sou

to lay down. But God accepted of her good will, and spared a life predestined to do great things for Him. The cancer which had settled in her constitution too firmly for eradication, gave her indeed the merit of dying daily by the intense agony it caused, but it never became an open wound, and whatever its secret pangs might be, she bore them with heroic patience, never allowing them to be made an excuse for relaxing in those exercises of penance and charity, by which the long years yet remaining to her of her pilgrimage on earth, were to be sanctified in the sight of God and man !

CHAPTER VI.

M. de Purnon, her eldest brother, marrying soon after her return from Bourbon, set up an establishment for himself, and her younger brothers, who had hitherto resided with him, earnestly requested Madame de Miramion to supply

...of her own home circle,
one to whom every other went for
thy or advice. This reunion unhappy
but of short duration, for war
out a little later, the young man
compelled to join their regiment,
youngest and best beloved, the
whom all her lifetime she had
almost a mother, fell soon after
a gallant assault during the siege of
recies. In apparent anticipation of
such misfortune, she had persuaded
before leaving Paris, to make a
which they were mutually to inherit
each other. This was virtually
inherit herself, as without such
event. the property of the ...

After her brother's death, Madame de Miramion found her chief consolation in the care and education of her little daughter.

This child, during the first years of her existence, had been, from the exceeding delicacy of her health, almost as much a cause of anxiety to her mother as of delight. The melancholy event by which her birth had been preceded, and the gloom which in consequence had hung around her cradle, seems to have had a very serious effect upon a naturally frail constitution. She was a docile, pretty child, but she had none of the reckless joy of childhood. "Pale and serious as a little nun," she never laughed, and was seldom even seen to smile, a calm sweet sadness, the reflection as it were, from her mother's brow, ever resting on her own. Now at last, however, having surmounted all the ills attendant upon infancy, her health grew stronger, and she became the joy, as she had ever been the jewel of her mother's heart.

To a certain extent Madame de Miramion felt it her duty to sacrifice that joy. The opinion of those days was invariably in

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of conventual education, and deemed that she was acting in the matter for the advantage of her child, she placed her in the convent of the Visitation, where she had resided herself some years before. It was a cruel separation, and she suffered from it cruelly—as cruelly perhaps as Madame de Sevigné herself, though she did not solace herself by writing eloquent letters on the “barbarie” which, in compliance with the customs of the times, she (Madame de Sevigné) considered she had been guilty. Neither

ed upon her daughter's mind. She even taught her to keep an exact account of her pocket money, in order that she might bestow a portion with more unfailing regularity on the poor; and when she saw that the little Marie eagerly caught at this idea, she ventured one step further, pointing out the merit of occasional self-denial, in matters of dress and amusement, in order to increase their share. For she comprehended herself, and she wished her daughter thoroughly to comprehend the immense value of that charity which is derived from personal privation. If the widow's mite was declared by Jesus to be more precious in the sight of God, than thousands flung down out of a superfluity that never feels its loss, it was because of the idea of sacrifice implied in the donation. This is indeed the especial virtue of the poor, who never give excepting at a loss; but it may and ought to be practised also by the rich, in the occasional sacrifice of some expensive whim, and for this reason Madame de Miramion encouraged her daughter to choose every now and then, a dress less rich or an ornament less expensive than

... her tenderness
a delicate and only child
suffered her to omit anything
she thought her capable of.
Contrary to the practice
whose affection for their
often purely natural, the
daughter ranked first in her
and its interests were never
lost sight of in her cares and
welfare.

She even accustomed herself
of the danger of infection, and
then to visit in the hospital
her joyfully on such occasions.
member, my daughter, that
hospitals is the

once. It soon appeared, however, that God had destined her to lead a good life in the world instead, and from that moment Madame de Miramion applied herself even more earnestly than she had done before, to prepare her for the position she would have to fill, and which, including as it did, the possession of great wealth, would be one of no ordinary danger. The duty and joy of almsgiving, both as a means of winning heaven, and of preserving the soul from all undue attachment to money, she had already impressed upon her mind, and to this first lesson she now added many others equally important, and equally adapted to her future position, as the head of a large household and immense estate. Knowing her child's natural bent towards piety, Madame de Miramion felt it less her duty to incite her to devotion, than to guard her against the danger of making that devotion wearisome to others. She taught her, therefore, to be devout and yet not to bury all other duties in that of prayer alone, but on the contrary, to make virtue attractive by the sweet and equal temper in which it was carried out, and by the tender sympathy which

any in her way, or avoidance would have caused others ; yet even while advising to descend thus far, she took care on the necessity of maintaining her own soul, a positive disposition to yield one inch to the fascinations of the world, when the question was between her and God.

In the affair of her own marriage, Madame de Miramion had been more governed by principles of religion, than by worldly ambition, and she followed the same plan in choosing a husband for her daughter.

M. de Nesmond was the person who was chosen after much consideration.

sequence of the innumerable charities in which it was employed, belonged far more to the public than to himself. In two such families as these, there could be no real joy unless the needy and unhappy had been made sharers in it, and Marie herself was the first to propose to her future husband, that the money (a thousand louis-d'or) which he had destined to purchase jewellery for his bride, should be bestowed instead upon the poor of Paris. The proposition tallied so exactly with his own tastes and habits, that it was joyfully accepted, and the day accordingly which made Marie de Miramion his wife, was a day of rejoicing to many a poor deserving family—the recipients of this princely bounty.

Madame de Miramion on her side inaugurated her daughter's marriage by a work of charity which she had long had at heart.

In her visit to the Hotel-Dieu, she had often found priests, whom sickness and poverty had driven to the hospitals, mixed up with patients of even the lowest class, there being no separate ward appointed for their reception. Filled with the most

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er veneration for the sacerdotal character, she had never ceased lamenting the incongruities of this position, and the many indignities to which it subjected those who in the sight and service of the Most High, ranked far above the princes of this world. Now, aided by the advice and assistance of M. de Lamoignon, she endeavoured to meet and in some degree remedy the evil, by founding a ward for the aged especially for priests. She began at first by establishing only two beds, the measure proving obviously use-

best chance of happiness, to bestow henceforth upon her husband. Madame de Miramion had been more almost than the most loving of mothers to her daughter; for half an orphan as the latter was even before her birth, she had felt it her duty as well as her best consolation, to supply the loss by uniting the strength of a father's love to that of a mother's on her child. Naturally, therefore, the whole happiness of her existence was bound up in the young Marie, yet on the day when she brought her to her bridal home, she found strength and grace to say, as she left her on its threshold:

“Remember, my daughter, that after God your first thought must be your husband. Love me still, but love him more, for both duty and religion compel you to this preference! Obey him in all that is not sin, and condescend to all his reasonable wishes. Should he, however, at any time, either from love of frivolous amusements or from projects of self-aggrandizement, attempt to plunge you deeper than is compatible with your duty as a child of God, into the *vortex* of the fashionable follies of the

— guilty dissipation
please their husbands ; for
of the name, will respect
and not love her less, when
she adheres consistently
laid down for her by her
Creator."

With these words, which
an echo in the heart and
every mother who really wishes
the happiness of her child, Madame
departed from the Hotel de L
returned to her now solitary

Feeling herself freed at
those duties which had hitherto
a restraint upon her inclinations
abandoned herself to
1--

clear judgment and a faith which never failed, had destined her for work impossible to be accomplished amid the restraints of a cloister.

St. Vincent of Paul, the great apostle of public charity in France, confirmed this judgment by his own, and Madame de Miramion, as a matter of course, submitted. In yielding, however, outwardly to their opinions, she inwardly resolved to be in all things but the name itself, a nun, and she rigidly kept her word.

It was an age of great wickedness, but of great virtue also. If one half of France set the fashion of immorality, the other gave an example of incomparable and uncompromising charity to the world.

Possibly the last was accepted by a merciful Providence as a partial atonement for the mischief accomplished by the first: and if the France of our days has emerged or is emerging from the infidelity, which sowing its seed so early as the reign of the fourteenth Louis, bore such fearful fruits afterwards at the epoch of the revolution, perhaps she owes it chiefly if not entirely to the treasure of *good works* laid up for her by her faith.

of all the gigantic charities
The first and most important
the measure or immeasurable
work to be accomplished, a
fact of its having reference
rather than to the body, was
the propagation of the faith.

Nearly a century of years
away since St. Francis Xav.
preached the gospel of Jesus
the nations of the east.
him and were baptized, a
doubtless, of these happy souls
crown and glory at this most
Saint in heaven! But after
passed away to his reward,

But in vain they abjured their native land, in vain they baptized in their blood the new countries of their adoption. The fierce policy of the heathen baffled all their calculations, and the foot of the missionary had scarcely touched the sod ere he fell a victim to the inexorable decree of death already pronounced against him. To feed a stream thus continually cut off almost as soon as it reached its destination, required not merely zeal and numbers, these the church has ever at her command, but funds for the expenses of their outfit, which could only be hers by the generosity of her children. An unanimous and continuous effort on the part of Christendom was needed for this purpose, and France, ever so great in deeds of charity, has the honour of having been foremost in the work, Madame de Miramion being the instrument appointed by Divine Providence to hang this wreath of true glory on her brow.

Touched by zeal for the honour of God, and filled with compassion for the desolation and loss of souls consequent upon the continual martyrdoms of the *men who would have devoted themselves*

... priests of his own
himself and his companio
sions of China, and the Inc

Three of them were app
on the spot, and they all re
immediately to France, to m
arrangements for their jour
de Miramion became at o
zealous and efficient of assist
She lent them her country
Paris, and here they remain
months preparing themselve
and penance for their wor
released them of every temp
expended besides enormous s
on all that could be useful to
wards in the 1-1

costly church ornaments, being buried beyond hope of recovery beneath the waves. It was all to begin over again, and sorrowful but not disheartened, Madame de Miramion once more took up the burden.

She had given so much from her own purse already, that this time she was obliged to appeal to the public to aid her. Her first visit was paid to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, that beautiful, witty woman, who in the lifetime of her uncle, the great minister of Louis XIII., had done the honours of his house for him, forming herself the chief attraction of his brilliant circle, but who since his death had retired completely from the world, and made it her principal occupation to dispense in charity the enormous wealth she had inherited from him. She had entered with zeal from the very first into Madame de Miramion's desire to assist M. de Pallu and his brethren, being among the few who had contributed to the expedition from her own purse, and she was deeply disappointed in proportion by its failure.

"Then we are but unprofitable servants after all," was her first exclamation on *hearing* of the shipwreck, but almost

mediately afterwards she added calmly
"Nevertheless we must not despair."

"He has closed this way against us, I
doubtless open another, and a better
soon. Perhaps after all, He has
permitted this in order to humble us,
showing us He has no need of our service.
In all events we will not give up in de-
spair but will strive and hope to the ve-
ry end—expecting all things from His
merciful mercy is all infinite."

"Thus mutually assisting and encour-
aging each other, these two zealous
men succeeded at last in sending the
missionaries a second time upon the

One of the latter died of fatigue
before reaching his destination, but the

phesy of his approaching death, which was justified soon afterwards by the event itself. His strength, he told Madame de Miramion, was failing fast, and God seemed interiorly to admonish him, that a longer voyage was soon to be required of him, than any which he had hitherto undertaken—namely, the voyage to eternity. He then mentioned some of the arrangements he had just made for his more distant missions, and ended by entreating her with more than usual earnestness to pray and procure the prayers of others for that great empire which had been committed to his keeping, and for which, in accepting of its bishopric he had made himself responsible before God. Evidently, from the way in which he speaks to her of the work he was engaged in, he considered it as one most especially her own. And so in truth it was! By the eloquence and zeal with which she had commended it to others, by the princely magnificence of the sums she had poured out upon it, by the labour and weariness she lavished on it, she had made it almost her own creation; and therefore, from the *distant shores* whither the propagation of

... the ... of that
tution which by its alms of
of prayer, enables him to win
himself and others, by carrying
ard of Jesus Christ to the fou
of the globe.

Madame de Miramion did r
her own country while thus pr
the wants of foreign lands. T
inflicted on morality by the
license of a time of war, filled
with sorrow. Paris especially h
a very sink of wickedness during
gles of the Fronde, and the
women dependent for their d
on the depravity of their lives
great at last, that the magist

religion. The poor wretches left their prison no better or rather worse than they had entered it, and the same poverty which had forced them before to sin, forcing them again to its repetition, their lives became a simple alternation between punishment and crime. Madame de Miramion could not see this state of things without longing to apply a remedy, and she easily obtained permission from the magistrates to try what her own personal exertions could effect. She hired a small house for the purpose, and here she assembled seven or eight unfortunates who would otherwise have been sent to prison, in order to see what impression could be made upon them by a more gentle mode of treatment.

Their general surveillance she confided to two prudent, pious women, who were charged never to lose sight of them night or day, but their religious instruction she reserved entirely for herself. Months were devoted almost exclusively to this work. She visited them continually, spending long hours in their society, listening to all they had to say to her or to each other, and studying carefully their

tempted *a propos* of :
her advice upon them
accustomed them to spe
confidentially before he
herself with waiting qu
chance word or circumstan
her to turn the convers
and as it were by accident,
affair of their own salvation

Even when she had adv
she was careful, instead of
raise them as much as cou
reasonably done in their o
she fully recognised the
principle upon which the
"Bon Pasteur" have
successf "

most in wickedness if in nothing else. : this reason she tried to make virtue set and amiable in their eyes, long ere she attempted to point out their deviations from its path ; and once past had been atoned for by a good confession, she endeavoured as much as possible to throw it into oblivion. Instead, refore, of the prison dress, which would e reminded them continually of their radiation, she clothed each of them tly and even becomingly, according to original condition of life ; and reserv-punishment as a last alternative, she ght instead to win them to good aviaour by encouragement and persuasion. No sooner did any of them e signs of real reformation, than she oubleed all her tenderness and care, ating her fallen sister with respect as l as affection, and thus practically conceing all, that if innocence has especial ms to reverence, so also has repent-e—the first, because it is still unined, the last, because it has washed its stains for ever in the blood of the mb.

Madame de Miramion had not been

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engaged upon this work of reformation before she discovered that in order to carry it out completely, it would be useful to divide her penitents into classes, and this for an obvious reason. Among such poor creatures there is always a marked diversity of disposition, some seeming to incline to evil by their very nature, while others have fallen as it were accidentally, and sometimes even against their own wishes into vice. The latter, of course, are susceptible of a degree of perfection to which the former

was amply provided to facilitate their progress towards perfection.

This double work grew and prospered in her hands until, instead of seven or eight, the number to which she had limited herself at first, hundreds were committed to her care. It was the first time such a scheme of reformation had been attempted or even thought of in Paris, but it succeeded so admirably that the public soon accepted of its existence as a great and indispensable addition to the charities of the age, and contributed largely to its funds. Madame de Miramion watched over it until it was sufficiently well established in general esteem to be left to its own resources, and then having written a proper rule of life for the inmates of either house, she handed over the new institution to a committee of management, in whose charge it was ultimately to remain. With this foundation, she may be said to have commenced her life of public charity in France; she closed it years afterwards by another, which though very different in its nature had the same object nevertheless in view—the extinction *or diminishing* of vice. In the work of “La

... she endeavoured to destroy
before they had begun to ger-
the human heart. The first id-
work came to her almost by
She was returning late one ev-
her own house, when she ch-
meet a party of young people
sexes, chattering and laughing
the almost deserted street. So-
girls were known to her by name
idea of all the evil likely to flow f-
unrestricted intercourse, howev-
cently begun, struck sadly on h-
All night long she meditated
all night long she prayed for g-
wisdom to remedy the evil, and
time the day had dawned he

for their daughters to speak to them also on the subject; and without betraying any previous knowledge of their habits, she managed by skilful questioning to obtain just such a degree of information as seemed to give her a right to sermonize them a little. Having shown them first the folly and mischief of an idle life, she ended by providing the remedy in the shape of an invitation to spend a few hours every day at her house, where she undertook to have them sufficiently instructed in needle-work to enable them afterward to earn at no expense, and little trouble, a decent livelihood for themselves. The girls were idle and thoughtless but not vicious, and they gladly accepted of the proposal. Her own house, however, proved insufficient for the purpose, and she hired another close at hand, in which she placed two mistresses, whose only duty was to instruct their pupils, and to superintend and control their general conduct. The girls were to come early and to remain all day, their hours of work being enlivened by the reading aloud of good and amusing books, and the singing of *pious canticles*, with occasional interrup-

who had earned it sufficient work, supper was provided all evening they returned to the a few orphans only, who were homeless, being permitted to stay in the house.

The utility of such an establishment was so self-evident, that both the rich and the poor people whom it intended to benefit, appreciated it at its fullest value, and similar institutions were soon set on foot in the provinces. Versailles, Fontainebleau, Compiègne, and the other palaces, likewise followed the example of Madame de Maintenon taking an interest in the charity, and the

already well acquainted with Madame de Miramion and her good works, both from his own personal knowledge of her character, and from the details which he received continually from Madame de Maintenon, who delighting in good works herself, took a generous pleasure in opening the sympathies of the king in the same direction.

Such indeed was his veneration for the saintly foundress of the "Chambre de travail," and of the "Sainte Famille," that he besought her to take charge of some young Huguenot ladies, for whom after the revocation of the edict of Nantes, he was anxious to find a Catholic protectress, and thanks to the wise gentleness she exercised in this office, not one of those committed to her care failed in the end to become converts to Catholicism, notwithstanding the feelings of political rancour with which they had naturally regarded it at first. Satisfied with her success in this affair, Louis the Fourteenth requested her afterwards to take upon herself the distribution of the abundant alms, which in the midst of his own *personal* magnificence he was always

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y to shower upon the poor; and as
office enlarged her powers of doing
, Madame de Miramion willingly
oted, and old and infirm as she was
he time, vigorously fulfilled it up
e last day of her life.

CHAPTER VII.

spiritual existence, and in its hidden strength they were to go forth into the world, and to wait upon human misery in whatever form of ignorance, disease, or poverty it might appeal to them for aid.

This had been the idea of St. Francis de Sales, in his first sketch of the Order of the Visitation, though the determined opposition of the Archbishop of Lyons had induced him to alter it afterwards to its present form.

The plan which he abandoned, Madame de Miramion was enabled to carry out afterwards in its general intentions, a rule for that purpose being given to her by her director, the Abbé Festal, only a short time before his death, and approved of by St. Vincent of Paul, the universal referee in that day, for all that regarded public institutions of charity. The duties of the sisters after certain hours set apart for prayer, were to consist in attending poor schools gratuitously, teaching besides at their own house, where they were to devote themselves more especially to the training young school mistresses for the country, visiting hospitals, and the sick *poor at their own abodes, and accepting*

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rally of whatever charitable occurs
us Providence might throw in their

Their dress was to consist of
e gown of black flannel, with a gim
cap of white linen, bound by a black
n, the whole being sufficiently grave
poor to indicate their profession of
at life, without pretending in any
to simulate the costume of religious
Madame de Miramion never aspired
e character of foundress of an order
intention being simply to supply
in the Church which St. Vincent
had perceived already, but which
isters of charity founded by him nearly
e same intention were not able, owing
he number and variety of their avo

which their external existence was to be devoted, more especially in all that had reference to the education of children, adding to this such a knowledge of the art of healing as would make them intelligent as well as willing nurses by the bedside of the sick.

Being their superior as well as their mistress in the novitiate, she taught them the higher duties of their calling, even more eloquently by example than by word of mouth, and by her obedience to every rule, her tenderness to others, her severity to herself, her humility in accusing herself publicly in chapter of the smallest of her failings, and in receiving and inviting the admonitions of even the lowest and least spiritualised of her daughters, she raised them gradually and almost imperceptibly to such a height of sanctity, as created the admiration of all who were cognisant of the work, and excited moreover a vehement desire on the part of many other similarly constituted congregations to be incorporated with her own. The daughters of St. Geneviève, a community founded for nearly the same object as the "*Sainte Famille*," about thirty years before, by

gent from the beginning for the
their mission, and at the moment
they applied to her, instead of be
to relieve the poverty of others
were actually in a state of want
themselves. It happened that M
Ferret, who had succeeded l'Abbe
as Madame de Miramion's director,
likewise the confessor of the convent
of St. Geneviève, and he interested
accordingly in the success of their
She could not refuse his prayer,
house she then occupied being too
for such an increase of numbers,
chased a larger one, which as Providence
ordained was close to the Hotel
mond for all

they had derived from their union with the "Sainte Famille," that they prepared, with the approbation of M. Ferret, a deed by which they conferred upon Madame de Miramion the title of their foundress, and accepted of her, moreover, as their superior for life. She was no sooner informed of the arrangement, than she vehemently opposed it—far from wishing to put herself forward as foundress, she was only too anxious to see her own community merged into that of St. Geneviève, and the same humility which urged her to shroud her name behind that of Madame de Blosset, made her shrink from the office of superior even for a time, much more when it was proposed to confer it on her in perpetuity. Public opinion, however, as well as the feelings of the two communities which had the happiness of being under her guidance, were against her in both matters, and her spiritual superiors positively refused her request, (a request repeated many times afterwards in the course of her life,) to be permitted to lay down her superiority altogether. The Archbishop of Paris at last put an end to the discussion, by giving her

a formal command to retain it until while the very name of the "Dau of St. Geneviève," became forgot that of the "Sainte Famille," both munities considering themselves, and considered by others, as the child the same foundation. For ten years supported this double institution e at her own expense, but at the that time it became, thanks to her management of its funds, sufficient to and she afterwards paid only such sion as sufficed to defray the expenses

some time, aiding and instructing the community she had accepted as her own, and leaving on her departure two of her daughters who had come with her from Paris, to finish the work thus begun. Long before she left, however, the good results of her visit to Amiens were visible to all, poor schools being set on foot, hospitals opened or entirely remodelled, and good works of all kinds, either inaugurated altogether or placed on a better footing than before.

So grateful indeed were the inhabitants of Amiens for the benefits which seemed to spring up spontaneously as it were beneath her footsteps, that they accompanied her at her departure to the very gates of their city, praying and thanking her, and beseeching her parting benediction as earnestly as if she had been a saint already, and actually visiting them from heaven. Many other communities requested afterwards to be affiliated to hers, the "Sœurs de Providence" more especially being anxious to share the benefit of her direction. She refused at first, partly because she dreaded the ill effects upon her *own soul* of such a multiplicity of offices.

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partly also, because these additions
or other duties seemed likely to inter-
fere with that yearning for solitude and
quiet prayers, which had haunted her
her lifetime, in a way very remarkable
she so evidently called to the contrary
of the active state. God Himself,
however, who even while suffering her
position to incline towards retirement,
yet sweetly, yet irresistibly compelling
her into a path far different, gave her a
thought upon the subject, and like
that which comes from God that thought

What right had she, or what valid reason
 should she give for refusing herself to His
 wishes?

To indulge in such a case in her own
 love of retirement, would be but a simple
 selfishness on her part; to plead danger
 to her own soul would be yet worse,
 for it would be to cast a doubt on the
 justice and mercy of God, Who never
 calls His creatures to any work without
 first providing grace and strength suffi-
 cient to enable them meritoriously to
 accomplish it. Touched to the quick by
 these reflections, she went the next morn-
 ing to reveal them to her director, and as
 he confirmed her in the idea that they
 came straight from God, she generously
 resolved to renounce her own desire for
 solitude, and to add the direction of the
 "Sœurs de Providence," and of some
 other communities to the burthen already
 on her shoulders, thus throwing her-
 self once more heartily and courage-
 ously into the battle of life, regard-
 less (to use her own expression) of the
 chance scratches she might receive in the
 meleé, so only that she could save others
 from being wounded unto death by sin.

From that moment thirst for
of souls, became more than a
tinctive mark of predestination
own. The peculiar nature of
ations brought home to her
very hour and moment of the
earful disparity existing betw
umber of souls saved, and t
rently lost for ever—the dispari
er, ever so distressing to the
nts,—the disparity only too a
ween the penances and the sin
itness of the first compared
tude of the latter,) of these eve
t be presumed to be convert
idst of the grief
ompari

vomiting with consequent inability to take food, and for this reason, though she had never relaxed her original rule of mortification, she had not been allowed to add anything to its primitive severity. But zeal for souls at last devoured her, and unable any longer to resist the impulse, she revealed to her director, M. Ferret, just two years before his death, the desire to do penance for the sins of others which God had been pleased to implant in her heart. For only answer he bade her content herself with the sufferings which she was enduring, and which she had endured already for so many years, and to offer them all for this especial end, keeping her soul, however, always in the disposition to be ready to suffer still more and yet still more for the same purpose, whenever God should give her health to do so. He ended by a few remarkable words which though they did not strike her particularly at the time, came to her recollection afterwards as a prophecy from the grave.

"The time," he said, "for doing such penance has not as yet arrived: when it comes, God Himself will give you a sign

...men, your task of re-
ment for the sins of others.
Two years after this conversa-
died. Knowing his holy l
doubting that he was alrea
heaven, Madame de Miram
interred with peculiar marks
at her own expense, causing
heart to be placed in a silv
deposited in the choir of th
St. Nicholas. After the fune
there to pray, and taking this
hand, she besought God wit
earnestness, by His love for
man who had guided her soul
years, to make His will in
manifest to her conscience.

when being again in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament in the same church, the recollection of his words, with a conviction of their fulfilment in the change which had been so suddenly effected in her own health, flashed like a revelation from the other world upon her soul. She gave herself up at once, with the consent of her new director, to the desire of doing penance by which she had been consumed for years. Her fasts became almost continuous, she curtailed her slumbers until the night was almost entirely dedicated to prayer, and besides innumerable other austerities, she carried a heavy iron chain four fingers thick continually on her person. This great increase of penance did not lessen her zeal for active work—everywhere she was to be found in the thickest of the battle, fighting bravely, now against the material misery, now against the spiritual destitution of her human brothers, relieving the first by her abundant alms, and founding schools and missions in all directions as the best antidote to the latter.

She became one of the chief benefactresses of the seminary for secular priests,

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h, first established by M. Bourdoise, remained intact even during the revolution, and serves to this day as a "Succursale" of the great seminary of St. Sulpice. The "Succursale," St. Vincent of Paul's favorite charity, was the object also of special predilection, and she obtained from the Queen Regent a grant of the Beau de Bicêtre, for the reception of a large number of the foundlings. Besides her daily occupations at the Hotel-Dieu and other hospitals, the care of the poor

charities commenced or continued during her time in France, but to give an account as well, of each of those years, (and unfortunately there were many of them,) which marked the annals of the land in black by the devastations of famine and disease.

When the plague broke out, 1673, in the city of Melun, and people, scared by the certainty and suddenness of the danger, fled in dismay from the sick beds even of the nearest and dearest of their kin, she repaired to the spot at once, shamed the terror-stricken population into something like fortitude by her own composure, provided for the wants, spiritual and temporal, of the poor wretches already smitten by the malady, and succeeded at last in inspiring into all hearts something of the charity and zeal which was burning in her own. Up to the moment of her arrival, the sick had actually been thrust out of their own homes and left to die in the streets by their friends, and unable to make head against the universal panic, the magistrates themselves had not only begun to share it, but were actually on the point of deserting their posts and retreating

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the city. Her presence among them
d their flight. They could not as
for very shame, fly from a danger
a woman had come of her own
d to brave. She sought them out
ce, and merely asking them to assign
a house large enough to serve as a
ital, undertook to be answerable her-
or all the rest.

ey gave her the largest they had at
disposal, and from her chateau of
elle, which was close at hand, she
ed such stores and furniture to be

never been known in France before. The poor people from the environs flocked in as usual for relief to Paris, bringing such an aggravation of disease and poverty in their train, that oftentimes no fewer than six thousand persons sought shelter in the Hotel-Dieu at once. As might be expected, the funds of the hospital proved at last inadequate to meet such a pressure. Money therefore was borrowed to supply the deficiency, and the year following, the directors finding themselves totally unable to repay the sums thus raised, the bankruptcy of the whole establishment became imminent. We have already mentioned that Madame de Miramion had, almost at the commencement of her career of charity, resided some months at the Hotel-Dieu, for the purpose of training a superior for the difficult task of superintendence over its various departments; she knew, therefore, better than any one all the miseries it sheltered, and all the sin and despair that would be the too probable result of its shipwreck. In fact it was impossible to exaggerate the greatness or reality of the evil. The hospital consisted of four separate establish-

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s, three of them being devoted to the
tion of the sick and poor, and the
h employed as a provision store
the use of the other three. At
very moment it contained, over and
its ordinary allowance of sick
aged persons, nearly a thousand
g girls, (most of them orphans or
letely friendless,) who having been
ved there during the worst days
e famine, it had been found impos-
to provide for since. No wonder,
when Madame de Miramion was

were thus let loose upon the streets of Paris, she besought a suspension of their late decree, (at least until the month of April,) by which time she hoped that God Himself would help her to avert the necessity for their expulsion.

Her powers of arrangement were so well known, that they did not hesitate to grant her request, grave as were the interests which would have been compromised by failure. This boon obtained, she spent some days more, according to her usual custom, before any great undertaking, in earnest prayer, and having fixed during that time upon the means most likely to prove successful, she went to the superior of the hospital to explain her plan. Such of the young girls as had relations or friends at all capable of supporting them, were to be sent out at once, she herself undertaking to see and examine the children one by one, in order to make sure there was no mistake as to the nature of their future prospects. After this concession to the immediate necessities of the establishment had been effected, she found that *seven hundred young girls still remained*

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its list, and these she pledged herself to the directors, to support at her own expense for the next twelve months, provided they on their part promised to allow her a residence for that time within the hospital, and to supply them with linen and bedding sufficient for the purpose. Her offer was accepted, although Madame de Mirmion was known at the time to be, in consequence of her lavish charities, very penniless, and although it was calculated that at least 40,000 francs (£1600. of our money,) would be required for the undertaking.

Her only hope in fact was in God, and the charity of the rich, and she did not hesitate, old and broken down by infirmity

innocently replied, "your charities are so great already, that I have a real scruple of proposing new ones to you!" Madame de Maintenon received the graceful compliment with a smile, nevertheless she insisted on forcing a large alms upon her aged suppliant, and the king himself sent her the next day an order for 25,000 francs—more than half the sum she had pledged herself to collect in the course of the ensuing twelve months.

She was not always, however, so well received! In spite of her age and reputation, she met occasionally with such severe rebuffs as made her say upon one occasion to the friend who accompanied her in her quest, "One must love God well indeed, to follow willingly such a trade as this!" But these checks were few and far between, for most of the influential persons whom she visited, received her in the same spirit of charity which had brought her to their doors, and aided her with unstinted alms. Nor was it in the shape of money only that their donations flowed in upon her. Ladies sacrificed their diamonds and rich dresses—gentlemen gave costly plate of gold and

—and pictures even of great price; all kinds of objects of expensive luxury brought continually to her house in that the proceeds of their sale might be added to her fund. Thus assisted, she placed herself in a marvellously short time in a position to fulfil her engagement with the directors of the hospital, the money she had so laboriously collected proving sufficient to support the establishment for twenty years, instead of one, the period which she had calculated at first. During that long interval, some of the still resident beneath its roof had died, others had been placed out in the world, many more had acquired such a knowledge of different employments as put

So far back as the year 1683, this idea had occurred to her in consequence of the good which Père de Valois, a zealous Jesuit, had accomplished in Normandy by his retreats for men. Long experience had, she thought convinced her, that there were many women in all ranks of life, who would find in a collective retreat, advantages which either from weakness of character or lack of the habit of mental prayer they were unable to obtain, while merely following out its exercises in the solitude of their own chamber. Collected thus together, the fervent, she hoped, would excite the tepid, the courageous give tone to the faint-hearted, and thus all move on, almost unconsciously to themselves, in the track which the more vigorous of the number had opened to their footsteps.

There were difficulties of course to be overcome, but she was accustomed to difficulties, and having obtained the consent of the archbishop of Paris, and of the king, without whom nothing could be done in the France of those days, she set valiantly about her work. Louis the Fourteenth did more than approve, he contributed largely towards the expenses

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the undertaking, other rich persons
equally liberal in their donations, and
was soon in a position to purchase a
house exactly suited to her purpose, it being
close to that of her own community that
it was easy to contrive a private means of
communication between the two. Her
intention was to give two retreats in the
house for ladies, who were to sleep and board
at the house, and pay a certain small
sum towards the expenses of their living.
For the poor, however, she resolved to
keep the number of retreats, receiving

the number had infinite need of the latter, their sins having been public and a cause of scandal, she checked her informant by saying quickly, "So much the better! retreats were made for sinners, and not for saints! Who knows if God may not have chosen this one in order to speak to their hearts in earnest?"

The result justified her words! Both retreats were a complete success, and so many and solid were the conversions resulting from them, that their saintly foundress declared herself more than repaid for all the time and trouble they had cost her.

In this temporary rest from the hard necessity of earning their daily bread, the poor found time to scrutinize their past lives, and having learned (as who does not) something in this study of their actual debts towards God, they became gradually, not merely content but grateful for that lowly lot in life, which shutting them out from the enjoyments of the rich, gave them in exchange, (by the struggles and sufferings it involved,) such a certain and yet easy method of doing penance in *the future*. On the other hand, the rich

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enchanted of the illusions of time by
steady gaze they had just fixed upon
nity, acquired a salutary dread of all
might hinder their salvation, and
ned to the world, to live *in* it indeed,
no longer of it, and more than one
didid establishment in Paris, was
ed afterwards by the sight of its
ress, renouncing all vain luxury of
s or ornament in her own person in
ur of the poor, and never ceasing in
efforts at self-abnegation, until she had
d down her individual wants, and

floor into a pleasant garden with great alleys of lime trees, which formerly shaded a private entrance into the church of St. Nicholas, and still lead the summer air with the perfume of their honied blossoms. The whole forms a portion now of the "Centrale Pharmacie" of the hospital of Paris, so that if no longer devoted to the cure of souls, it is consecrated at all events to that which next to their spiritual welfare, was ever the dearest anxiety of its original proprietress—the health and comfort of the poor.

CHAPTER VIII.

While Madame de Miramion thus wrought wonders by her zeal in the service of God, He Himself took care, like a good master, to fill up the measure of her merits by a full share of that chalice of suffering, of which each of us are destined in our degree to drink, and those most deeply (let us never forget it) who are

.

... suffered continually martyr
a more accidental nature,
wrong already by the cor-
that misery which it was
work of her life to lessen,
besides over and over again
one after another, of nearly all.
and most of the friends of her
We have already mentioned th
M. Ferret, her director for
years, for whom she wept as fo
able father. M. de Lamoignon,
of her son-in-law, was among th
go. His loss to her both as a fri
adviser was incalculable, he havi
for more than thirty
of all her

panegyrics, that "he seemed to consider his very life as being less his own, than as a gift confided to him to be expended in their service." Not contented with devoting to this object both his time and economies from his private fortune, he made over to their use besides the emoluments of his public office, delighting in the idea that he was thus actually relieving them by the labour of his own life. His death was sudden; Madame de Miramion had seen him only the night before in perfect health, and the next morning she learned that he was dead! Sudden as it was, however, it could not be said to have been unprovided. God seems to have favoured him with a presentiment of his approaching end, at least two years before it really took place. In a letter to his daughter written some time previously, he almost prophesied the fact, and in his speech in Parliament only the day before it actually took place, he postponed all political discussions in order to expatiate with zeal and fervour upon the misery of an unprovided death, (a subject not often alluded to on that arena,) and on the folly and madness of men who so easily nat

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all care and preparation for an event which the happiness or misery of whole eternity depends, until it is nigh, or perhaps entirely, too late.

In consequence of this presentiment, he applied himself more earnestly than to a life of charity and devotion, approaching the sacrament so frequently with such sentiments of piety andunction, that notwithstanding the nearness of his end, his friends felt could apply to him with truth that he was so full of consolation to surviving

own exile, which he attributed to her influence, the Duke of Lorrain had caused it to be administered to Madame in a glass of chicory water, and it was said, moreover, that M. de Purnon, Madame de Miramion's brother, and maitre d'Hotel to the Duchess, had been his accomplice in the matter. The fact of poison once admitted, the state of the case was in truth against him, Madame having been seized with her last illness immediately after drinking a glass of chicory water, which in his official capacity as her "Maitre d'Hotel," M. de Purnon had presented to her. His life, therefore, seemed for a moment to hang upon a thread, and his sister was completely overwhelmed at the prospect. She knew him indeed as incapable as she was herself of committing such a crime, but the public might not be of the same opinion; he might moreover, (however innocent in his own intentions,) have been made a blind instrument for the wickedness of others, and if so, in the impossibility of reaching the real author of the murder, he might and too probably would be made *to suffer its penalty instead.*

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Fortunately for him, Madame de la
ette, who chanced to have been in
ing that day upon the Duchess, had
k the remainder of the chicory water,
having, as she positively declared,
no ill effect in consequence, it
ed to follow as a matter of course,
the liquor contained no poison.

This fact, added to the result of the
ical examination, which declared her
n to have been caused by natural
dy alone, cleared the character of M.
Burnon in the eyes even of the most

ever, before he could put it into execution, the Duke of Orleans being very unwilling to permit him to do so; but no sooner had he wrung a reluctant consent from his lips, than he retired at once, not only from the court, but also from the city, and spent the rest of his days in profound retirement in the country. Thus the event which at first sight seemed calculated to shipwreck his happiness and that of his sister, contributed under God's kind Providence, to place both in the end on a larger and more solid foundation, M. de Purnon winning his way to heaven by all sorts of works of charity and devotion, and Madame de Miramion rejoicing in his good deeds as if they had been her own.

She lost her eldest brother, M. de Bellefond, in the year 1682. He also lived in the country, and on hearing of his illness she went at once to wait upon his sick bed. The malady was from the first so evidently of a fatal nature, that she was soon obliged to add spiritual to material nursing, preparing him gradually and tenderly for the coming change, *helping him to profit of each separate*

te of the time still left him, and by night or day relaxing in her watch until his soul had gone, as she had every reason to hope! Overwhelmed at once by fatigue and sorrow, she returned to Paris, and every next day found her prostrate in bed, seemed only too likely to prove her bed.

Her daughter, her only remaining brother, M. de Purnon, and all the more distant members of her family, as well as the members of her own community were filled with dismay and grief, but she herself had a different feeling on the subject, and in the midst of their tears and lamentations remained calm and smiling, unable to

and submissive, fulfilling most perfectly that rule of all the saints, to "ask for nothing, and refuse nothing."

Perceiving this, her daughter once gently reproached her for an excess of mortification, which left her at times without even a drop of cold water to moisten her parched lips, but Madame de Miramion simply answered, "that not being able then, to do great things for God, it was all the more needful to be faithful in little ones," a rule which if we only carried it out as consistently as she did, would make saints of us all in the most trifling of our maladies.

In spite of all their care and remedies, however, she rapidly grew worse, and was soon so ill that her life was publicly prayed for in the Church of St. Nicholas. One of the sisters of her community came to tell her this, adding in a tone of great exultation, that the Curé, in recommending her to the prayers of his people, had spoken of her and her good works in a tone of unqualified approbation. Madame de Miramion had not patience to allow her even to finish her sentence, yet unwilling to mortify the poor sister (whose

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after all was but the indiscretion (great love) by an open rebuke, she called Madame de Nesmond to her side, and said earnestly, "Do not my daughter, I beg of you, allow any thing to be said in this room which can feed my vanity—we are all of us by our human nature full of pride, and when the devil can find another way to our souls, he is certain to find this one. Believe me," she added, with the earnestness of true humility, "believe me, it is a serious thing to have to render an account even of our good

this time, they would take better care of her in future, by not allowing her to expose herself to such an excess of mental and bodily fatigue, as she had hitherto been in the habit of enduring, and to which in a great measure they attributed her present condition.

She listened to them for a few minutes as quietly as she could, but unable at last to keep silence any longer, interrupted them to say with a little holy impatience in her manner, "Not so, my daughter, *not so!* my life is neither yours or mine, it belongs to God, and if He spares it this time, it will be to me a certain sign that He wills it to be employed henceforth as completely and even more completely than ever in His service!"

During one of her worst days of illness, the gospel at Mass chanced to be that of the cure of the man born blind, and on returning from church Madame de Nesmond went straight to her mother's chamber, and besought her to ask her recovery as he had done, of Jesus; adding her own firm conviction that the petition would be granted. Madame de Miramion, however, positively refused to put up any

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er which tended to the prolongation
er own life, saying resolutely that it
n God's hands to do with it what He
l; but that for her own part, she had
earer wish than to lay it down at once,
rder all the sooner to behold Him
m her soul loved and longed for, in
beauty and glory of His eternal
dom!

at the idea of a miraculous recovery
nued to haunt the mind of Madame
esmond, and M. Joly, her mother's
or chancing to call soon after, she

Kneeling down he said a short but fervent prayer, then recalling Madame de Nesmond, he asked her if she had a medicine or potion of any kind which she could administer to the invalid. This was not exactly what she had expected, and she answered sadly, that "many indeed had been ordered, but that all had proved useless, one as another, upon trial."

"Never mind," said the holy old man, with a faith and confidence in God's goodness, which seemed enough in itself to draw down a miracle from heaven, "give her any that you happen to have at hand, for the hour has come to take it."

In obedience to this command, Madame de Nesmond brought a potion composed chiefly of white of eggs, "harmless but useless," as the physicians had already assured her, and as from the nature of the ingredients one can readily believe, and gave it to her mother. Three hours later, the fever suddenly leaving her, she was soon out of danger, and able in a marvellously short time to return to her usual occupations, the only change in her former habits being that she no longer slept upon a bare board, as up to the

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commencement of her illness she had
since the age of twenty.

Early twelve months after this mira-
s recovery, she saw M. de Bussy
the first time since he had carried her
y-six years before, a reluctant and
ted captive to his castle. During all
lapse of time he had religiously kept
word, and had never once attempted
crude himself on her presence. Now,
ver, having need of her services, he
to her as a suppliant, and as a
iant she consented to receive him.

never could have done, of the heavenly beauty of the soul within.

M. de Bussy was so struck by the contrast, and so moreover besides with reverence for the virtues of the woman he had once dared wantonly to insult, that, courtier and man of the world as he was, he completely lost his presence of mind, and stood silent and abashed before her.

She relieved him from this state of unwonted embarrassment by greeting him as calmly and courteously, as if he had been a perfect stranger to her. No allusion whatever was made to former times, and after enquiring minutely into the nature of the service he came to ask at her hands, she closed the interview by promising to do all in her power to forward his wishes, an engagement which she afterwards most amply fulfilled.


Madame de Miramion was on the eve at that moment, although she never guessed it, of one of the deepest and most irreparable of the sorrows of her later years. The loss of M. de Nesmond, her son-in-law, was in fact a double grief to her tender, loving heart. She wept for him.

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for her own sake and for her daughter, and in her first sad efforts to console her daughter, she seemed to renew all the pain and anguish of her own still earlier and more desolate widowhood. Happily as it was for himself, M. de Nesmond had established it as a rule in his house, that no one should be seriously indisposed for the space of three days without receiving the visit of a priest, and he no sooner found himself compelled to keep his bed, than in spite of all the physicians could do to the contrary, for they considered

youngest daughter of the former Duke of Orleans, and consequently cousin of the king. The life of this lady had been devoted in a very remarkable manner to works of charity and devotion, yet timid and scrupulous to a fault by nature, she was known to have been haunted from her very cradle by such a dread of death, that now when it was actually approaching, not one of her household had the courage to tell her it was already there, and even on the threshold.

They fancied the news would overwhelm her, but they knew little of the ways of God or of His dealings with His creatures, when they thought so. No! Never will He desert in death, those who have served Him faithfully in life, rather will He work a miracle in their favour than seem even, to human eyes, to do it. And, therefore, it is that we so often see the most timorous grow brave in the grasp of death, and that for one saint who has trembled at the judgment about to follow, hundreds are upon record who have passed in the full tide of gladness to the grave, the light of eternity already in their *dying* eyes, its peace upon their faded



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s, and in their ears the whispering angel voices making such sweet melody to the soul, that, as the "dear St. Elizabeth" innocently expressed it to her companion, she could not refrain from singing sweetly with them and to them in return. So was it now with the ladies of Guise. In their perplexity and distress, fearing alike for her safety in this world and the next, her ladies and for Madame de Miramion, who had been the friend of their dying mistress, and the confidant and distributor

nion she was making then, had been her first, instead of her viaticum—her last! The king, who was much attached to her, came afterwards to say farewell, and though she was evidently a little moved at first, she parted from him calmly and courageously, promising, if God as she hoped, should show her mercy, to pray fervently for him and his in heaven. An hour later and she was dead, and Madame de Miramion, who had remained with her, exhorting and encouraging her to the last, returned immediately to Paris. It was the closing charity of her life, and undoubtedly that life was shortened by it. The ensuing night she was taken ill, but being unwilling to disturb the household remained quiet until morning, when her daughter found her in a state which left little doubt as to her approaching end. The physician called in made matters worse, for mistaking her exhaustion for apoplexy, he increased the evil by bleeding and depletion. Her sufferings soon became grievous. "I fear to grow impatient, so grievously do I suffer," she said to the confessor of her community, *who on hearing of her attack had hastened*

ful indeed, if He allows
satisfied by such small
Her constant vomitings i
of her illness, made i
administer holy commun
her confessor, feeling tha
had earned this last con
diligence it was that of his
could not bring himself to
disappointment to her.

She saw his embarrassme
ing its cause generously fo
disappointment in order t
feelings, showing him that
derstood and acquiesced in
of the case. and

received all the other Sacraments of the Church, it was judged safe to admit her to Communion also. At this good news the dying woman, strong still in the midst of suffering, in the love of God raised herself up in bed, gathering soul and body, as it were, together, in order to meet and receive her Lord. In this attitude, immoveable from respect and love, her hands clasped together, her eyes fixed upon the Host, her pale face radiant with faith and love, she received Communion, and then lay down once more to die in the very embraces (as she hoped) of her divine Spouse. Struck by the supernatural brightness of her looks, and feeling, perhaps, that if God could inspire such love, He would refuse nothing such love could ask, Madame de Nesmond ventured once more to entreat her mother to pray, as she had done on a previous occasion, for her recovery.

But the saints have a sure instinct in such matters! Madame de Miramion was going to her reward, and she knew it, so she only answered gently: "Nay, my daughter, that I cannot do, it is time now to go to God, and to enjoy Him!"

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however, almost immediately
wards, as if fearing she had spoken
positively of her own safety, "So, at
I hope, trusting in His great
!"

Contrary to all expectation, she lingered
days after this, completing her
by a real martyrdom of pain. Not
by word or deed she gave any
external indication of the fact, for she lay
calm and mute and smiling, as if her
had been made of roses, not of
the cross which

in heaven, and giving her, as a final, precious pledge of love, the cross she was holding in her hands, and which was so soon to receive the last kiss of her own dying lips, after having been for thirty years and upwards in her possession.

Towards evening she remembered a certain casket which contained many papers and letters relative to her conscience, and to the good works in which she had been engaged, and sitting up in bed, she made a last effort to collect them in a packet for the fire. But she was quite unequal to the exertion, and seeing this, and dreading besides the destruction of these precious documents, her daughter begged her to defer the task of examining them until she felt a little stronger. To this she perforce consented, and God so willed it that the thought never again occurred to her. The papers came after her death intact into Madame de Nesmond's hands, and formed the principal source from whence her first biographer drew the materials for her Life. Hopeless as her malady had become, her family, unable to reconcile themselves to their impending loss, called in one doctor after another.

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cks as well as the regular faculty being consulted—any one in fact—who pretended to a knowledge of her disease, and of the proper mode of treating it. Each, as a natural consequence, had some new remedy to propose, and each new remedy, while it added to her tortures, failed, as the saintly parent predicted beforehand that it would fail, in reaching the real seat of the malady, and removing or diminishing the danger. Faithful, however, to her self-imposed law of obedience on the sick bed, never refused to try anything they

lated to do harm than good, and this fact, if we consider it well, seems to enhance the merit of her obedience until it makes it almost sublime. In the midst of this weariness and pain, her soul began to pine once more for the presence of her Divine Spouse, and the Archbishop of Paris having given the required permission, she again received our Lord in a transport of love and joy, which remained with her from that moment to the end. The daughters of her community being present upon this occasion, knelt down afterwards to implore her benediction. "I am not worthy! oh, I am not worthy!" she whispered to her confessor; but seeing the trouble which this answer caused them, she added, gently, "yet, let them only be faithful to their vocation, and God Himself will bless them, as He alone knows how or can!"

Then still further to console them, she called them one by one to her bed side, giving to each in a low voice, just that particular word of comfort or counsel which she thought needed by the character or position of the sister she addressed.

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occupied in this manner, a was much attached to her, but aged to a different community, denly into the room, and without any or preface, bluntly asked her death her heart after death to the of the congregation to which she belonged." The dying woman with a smile to those of her own nity who were present at the and without betraying either ence at the strange in which

plish her long cherished wish of dying as a simple sister. Finding, however, that they still objected, she humbly acquiesced in their decision, and never again alluded to the subject.

As her strength of body failed, her spirit, always so strong and clear, seemed to grow stronger and clearer still if possible, than ever. Besides exhorting her community, and consoling to the best of her ability her daughter and her only remaining brother, she dictated a long letter to Madame de Maintenon, entreating her to take care that the king's charities, of which she herself had hitherto been the principal dispenser, should after her death be continued to the poor. Dreading the consequence of all this fatigue, her confessor feigned to be astonished and exclaimed: "How, Madame! is it possible you can think just now of anything but God?" "Yes, mon Père," she answered, promptly, "when it is *for* God!"

She spoke to him afterwards long and earnestly of the sins and omissions of her past life; but when he tried to console her by saying something of the good

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which it had been so entirely ab-
e checked him at once by ask-
ly—"How he could venture
n language to a sinner?" Then,
own desire, she made her profes-
with aloud, renewing at the same
er baptismal vows. She had
done so ere she fell into such a
ethargy, that for one moment her
or fancied she was dead. He tried
e her by saying—"Madame, you
any pulse left, but you have
can do with it?"

like a trumpet call from her death-like stupor.

"Love Him! Yes, I do love Him," she cried, vehemently, when some one with cruel kindness tried to excite her to sensibility by suggesting that she no longer thought of Him, or loved Him.

There seemed such a strange vitality in all this, that her friends, unable even yet to renounce the hope of saving her, continued in that hope to torture her to the end.

Blisters were again proposed and tried. She made no resistance, merely saying to her daughter, "They will not cure me, for the hour is come!" Her confessor asked her if she still felt pain. "Yes," she said, "for my infidelities to God! nevertheless He is my Father, most tender and most true, and I confide entirely in His mercy!" "Do not weep, my child," she afterwards whispered to her daughter, when the latter, feeling at last that the hour had come, knelt down for a parting benediction: "Do not weep; but thank God on the contrary for all His mercies, and never forget that to love Him in this life, is our

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ouse her by saying—"Madame, you
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l a heart, what will you do with it?"
will love God with it," she exclaimed,
th a sudden energy, which in her en-
abled state seemed almost supernatural.
And in what disposition do you wish to
o to Him?" he asked, still further trying
"In the exercise of that very love
-being as succinctly, a

MARIE BONNEAU DE MIRAMION.

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"Love Him! Yes, I do love she cried, vehemently, when some with cruel kindness tried to exalt to sensibility by suggesting that she no longer thought of Him, or loved Him.

There seemed such a strangeness in all this, that her friends, unwilling yet to renounce the hope of salvation, continued in that hope to torture to the end.

Blisters were again proposed and she made no resistance, merely saying to her daughter, "They will not cry for the hour is come!" Her confessor asked her if she still felt pain. "No," she said, "for my infidelities but nevertheless He is my Father, tender and most true, and I am entirely in His mercy!" "Do not weep, child," she afterwards whispered to her daughter, when the latter, feeling at last that the hour had come, bowed down for a parting benediction. "Do not weep; but thank God on the contrary for all His mercies, and *forget that to love Him in this*

his kingdom, be sure that I
you, that you may do so well

Bodily pain increasing visitor tried to console her by
her that the greatest sufferings
are as nothing compared to those
of the joy with which God will
them in the next.

"Yes! yes! I know it all
cried, with a vehemence, which
all who heard her.

"Say, you *believe* it!"
answered gently, "hereafter
know it!"

She bowed her head in
quiescence, closed her eyes
expired.



